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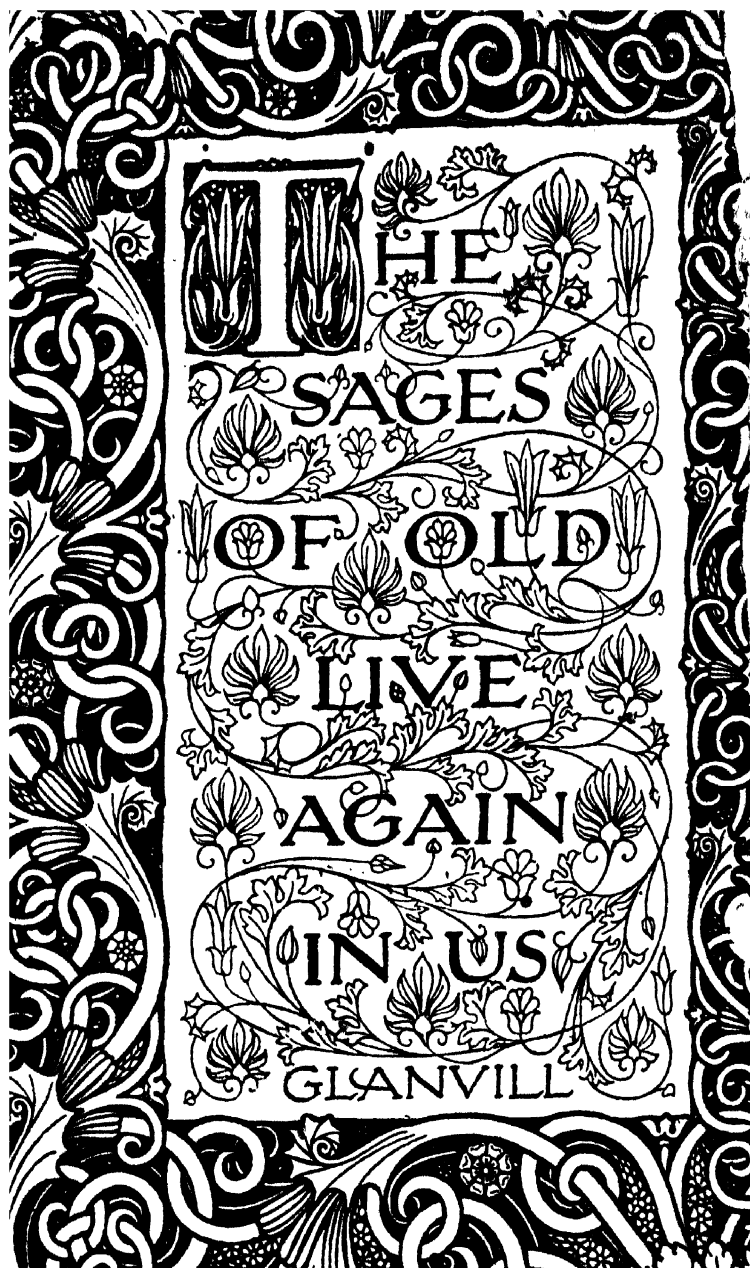
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THE PLAYS OF  
EURIPIDES  
IN ENGLISH  
IN 2 VOLUMES  
VOLUME II



LONDON: PUBLISHED  
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# EURIPIDES

## THE BACCHANALS

### PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

DIONYSUS.

CHORUS OF BACCHANALS.

TIRESIAS.

CADMUS.

PENTHEUS.

ATTENDANT

MESSENGER.

SECOND MESSENGER

AGAVE.

*Dionysus.* Unto this land of Thebes I come, Jove's son,

Dionysus ; he whom Semele of yore,  
Mid the dread midwifery of lightning fire,  
Bore, Cadmus' daughter. In a mortal form,  
The God put off, by Dirce's stream I stand,  
And cool Ismenos' waters ; and survey  
My mother's grave, the thunder-slain, the ruins  
Still smouldering of that old ancestral palace,  
The flame still living of the lightning fire,  
Herè's immortal vengeance 'gainst my mother.

And well hath reverent Cadmus set his ban  
On that heaven-stricken, unapproached place,  
His daughter's tomb, which I have mantled o'er  
With the pale verdure of the trailing vine.

And I have left the golden Lydian shores,  
The Phrygian and the Persian sun-seared plains,  
And Bactria's walls ; the Medes' wild wintry land  
Have passed, and Araby the Blest ; and all  
Of Asia, that along the salt-sea coast  
Lifts up her high-towered cities, where the Greeks,  
With the Barbarians mingled, dwell in peace.

And everywhere my sacred choirs, mine Orgies  
Have founded, by mankind confessed a God.  
Now first in an Hellenic town I stand.

Of all the Hellenic land here first in Thebes,  
I have raised my revel shout, my fawn-skin donned,  
Ta'en in my hand my thyrsus, ivy-crowned.

But here, where least beseemed, my mother's sisters  
Vowed Dionysus was no son of Jove :

▲



## Euripides

That Semele, by mortal paramour won,  
 Belied great Jove as author of her sin ;  
 'Twas but old Cadmus' craft : hence Jove in wrath  
 Struck dead the bold usurper of his bed.

So from their homes I've goaded them in frenzy ;  
 Their wits all crazed, they wander o'er the mountains,  
 And I have forced them wear my wild attire.  
 There's not a woman of old Cadmus' race,  
 But I have maddened from her quiet house ;  
 Unseemly mingled with the sons of Thebes,  
 On the roofless rocks, 'neath the pale pines, they  
 sit.

Needs must this proud recusant city learn,  
 In our dread Mysteries initiate,  
 Her guilt, and humbly seek to make atonement :  
 To me, for Semele, mine outraged mother—  
 To me, the God confessed, of Jove begot.  
 Old Cadmus now his might and kingly rule  
 To Pentheus hath given up, his sister's son,  
 My godhead's foe ; who from the rich libation  
 Repels me, nor makes mention of my name  
 In holy prayer. Wherefore to him, to Thebes,  
 And all her sons, soon will I terribly show  
 That I am born a God : and so depart  
 (Here all things well disposed) to other lands,  
 Making dread revelation of myself.

But if this Theban city, in her ire,  
 With arms shall seek to drive from off the mountains  
 My Bacchanal rout, at my wild Mænads' head  
 I'll meet, and mingle in the awful war.  
 Hence have I ta'en the likeness of a man,  
 Myself transmuted into human form.

But ye, who Tmolus, Lydia's strength, have left  
 My Thyasus of women, whom I have led  
 From lands barbarian, mine associates here,  
 And fellow-pilgrims ; lift ye up your drums,  
 Familiar in your native Phrygian cities,  
 Made by your mother Rhea's craft and mine ;  
 And beat them all round Pentheus' royal palace,  
 Beat, till the city of Cadmus throngs to see.  
 I to the Bacchanals in the dim glens  
 Of wild Cithæron go to lead the dance.

## The Bacchanals

*Chorus.* From the Asian shore,  
And by the sacred steep of Tmolus hoar,  
Light I danced with wing-like feet,  
Toilless toil and labour sweet !  
Away ! away ! whoe'er he be ;  
Leave our path, our temple free !  
Seal up each silent lip in holy awe.  
But I, obedient to thy law,  
O Dionysus ! chant the choral hymn to thee

Blest above all of human line,  
Who, deep in mystic rites divine,  
Leads his hallowed life with us,  
Initiate in our Thyasus ;  
And, purified with holiest waters,  
Goes dancing o'er the hills with Bacchus' daughters.  
And thy dark orgies hallows he,  
O mighty mother, Cybele !  
He his thyrsus shaking round,  
All his locks with ivy crowned,  
O Dionysus ! boasts of thy dread train to be.

•  
Bacchanals ! away, away !  
Lead your God in fleet array ;  
Bacchus lead, the ever young,  
A God himself from Gods that sprung,  
From the Phrygian mountains down  
Through every wide-squared Grecian town.  
Him the Theban queen of yore  
'Mid Jove's fast-flashing lightnings bore :  
In her awful travail wild  
Sprung from her womb the untimely child,  
While smitten with the thunderblast  
The sad mother breathed her last.

Instant him Saturnian Jove  
Received with all a mother's love ;  
In his secret thigh immured,  
There with golden clasps secured,  
Safe from Herè's jealous sight ;  
Then, as the Fates fulfilled, to light

He gave the hornéd god, and wound  
 The living snakes his brows around ;  
 Whence still the wandéd Mænads bear  
 Their serpent prey wreathed in their floating hair.

Put on thy ivy crown,  
 O Thebes, thou sacred town !  
 O hallowed house of dark-haired Semele !  
 • Bloom, blossom everywhere,  
 With flowers and fruitage fair,  
 And let your frenzied steps supported be  
 With thyrsi from the oak  
 Or the green ash-tree broke :  
 Your spotted fawn-skins line with locks  
 Torn from the snowy fleecéd flocks :  
 Shaking his wanton wand let each advance,  
 And all the land shall madden with the dance.

Bromius, that his revel rout  
 To the mountains leads about ;  
 To the mountains leads along,  
 Where awaits the female throng ;  
 From the distaff, from the loom,  
 Raging with the God they come.  
 O ye mountains, wild and high,  
 Where the old Kouretæ lie :  
 Glens of Crete, where Jove was nurst,  
 In your sunless caverns first  
 The crested Korybantes found  
 The leathern drums mysterious round,  
 That, mingling in harmonious strife  
 With the sweet-breathed Phrygian fife,  
 In Mother Rhea's hands they place,  
 Meet the Bacchic song to grace.  
 And the frantic Satyrs round  
 That ancient Goddess leap and bound :  
 And soon the Trieteric dances light  
 Began, immortal Bacchus' chief delight.

On the mountains wild 'tis sweet  
 When faint with rapid dance our feet ;  
 Our limbs on earth all careless thrown  
 With the sacred fawn-skins strewn,

## The Bacchanals

5

To quaff the goat's delicious blood,  
A strange, a rich, a savage food.  
Then off again the revel goes  
O'er Phrygian, Lydian mountain brows ;  
Evoë ! Evoë ! leads the road,  
Bacchus self the maddening God !  
And flows with milk the plain, and flows with wine,  
Flows with the wild bees' nectar-dews divine ;  
And soars, like smoke, the Syrian incense pale—  
The while the frantic Bacchanal  
The beaconing pine-torch on her wand  
Whirls around with rapid hand,  
And drives the wandering dance about,  
Beating time with joyous shout,  
And casts upon the breezy air  
All her rich luxuriant hair ;  
Ever the burthen of her song,  
" Raging, maddening, haste along  
Bacchus' daughters, ye the pride  
Of golden Tmolus' fabled side ;  
While your heavy cymbals ring,  
Still your ' Evoë ! Evoë ! ' sing ! "  
Evoë ! the Evian god rejoices  
In Phrygian tones and Phrygian voices,  
When the soft holy pipe is breathing sweet,  
In notes harmonious to her feet,  
Who to the mountain, to the mountain speeds ;  
Like some young colt that by its mother feeds,  
Gladsome with many a frisking bound,  
The Bacchanal goes forth and treads the echoing  
ground.

*Tiresias.* Ho ! some one in the gates, call from his place  
Cadmus, Agenor's son, who, Sidon's walls  
Leaving, built up this towered city of Thebes.  
Ho ! some one say, " Tiresias awaits him."  
Well knows he why I am here ; the covenant  
Which I, th' old man, have made with him still older,  
To lift the thyrsus wand, the fawn-skin wear,  
And crown our grey hairs with the ivy leaves.

*Cadmus.* Best friend ! with what delight within my palace  
I heard thy speech, the speech of a wise man !  
Lo ! I am here, in the God's sacred garb ;

For needs must we, the son of mine own daughter,  
 Dionysus, now 'mongst men a manifest God,  
 Even to the utmost of our power extol.  
 Where shall we lead the dance, plant the light foot,  
 And shake the hoary locks? Tiresias, thou  
 The aged lead the aged : wise art thou,  
 Nor will I weary night and day the earth  
 Beating with my lithe thyrsus. Oh, how sweetly  
 Will we forget we are old !

*Tiresias.* Thou'rt as myself :

I too grow young ; I too essay the dance.

*Cadmus.* Shall we, then, in our chariots seek the mountains ?

*Tiresias.* It were not the same homage to the God.

*Cadmus.* The old man still shall be the old man's tutor.

*Tiresias.* The God will guide us thither without toil.

*Cadmus.* Of all the land, join we alone the dance ?

*Tiresias.* All else misjudge ; we only are the wise.

*Cadmus.* Too long we linger ; hold thou fast mine hand.

*Tiresias.* Lo ! thus true yoke-fellows join hand with hand.

*Cadmus.* I, mortal-born, may not despise the Gods.

*Tiresias.* No wile, no paltering with the deities.

The ancestral faith, coeval with our race,

No subtle reasoning, if it soar aloft

Even to the height of wisdom, can o'erthrow.

Some one will say that I disgrace mine age,

Rapt in the dance, and ivy-crowned my head.

The Gods admit no difference : old or young,

All it behoves to mingle in the rite.

From all he will receive the common honour,

Nor deign to count his countless votaries.

*Cadmus.* Since thou, Tiresias, seest not day's sweet light,

I, as thy Seer, must tell thee what is coming.

Lo, Pentheus, hurrying homewards to his palace,

Echion's son, to whom I have given the kingdom.

He is strangely moved ! What new thing will he say ?

*Pentheus.* I have been absent from this land, and hear

Of strange and evil doings in the city.

Our women all have left their homes, to join

These fabled mysteries. On the shadowy rocks

Frequent they sit, this God of yesterday,

Dionysus, whosoe'er he be, with revels

Dishonourable honouring. In the midst

## The Bacchanals

7

Stand the crowned goblets; and each stealing  
forth,

This way and that, creeps to a lawless bed;

In pretext, holy sacrificing Mænads, .

But serving Aphrodite more than Bacchus.

All whom I've apprehended, in their gyves

Our officers guard in the public prison.

Those that have 'scaped I'll hunt from off the  
mountains,

Ino, Agave who to Echion bare me,

Her too, Autonoe, Antæus' mother;

And fettering them all in iron bonds,

I'll put an end to their mad wickedness.

'Tis said a stranger hath appeared among us,

A wizard, sorcerer, from the land of Lydia,

Beauteous with golden locks and purple cheeks,

Eyes moist with Aphrodite's melting fire.

And day and night he is with the throng, to guile

Young maidens to the soft inebriate rites.

But if I catch him 'neath this roof, I'll silence

The beating of his thyrsus, stay his locks'

Wild tossing, from his body severing his neck.

He, say they, is the new God, Dionysus,

That was sewn up within the thigh of Jove.

He, with his mother, guiltily that boasted

Herself Jove's bride, was blasted by the lightning.

Are not such deeds deserving the base halter?

Sin heaped on sin! who'er this stranger be.

But lo, new wonders! see I not Tiresias,

The prophet, in the dappled fawn-skin clad?

My mother's father too (a sight for laughter!)

Tossing his hair? My sire, I blush for thee

Beholding thine old age thus fatuous grown.

Wilt not shake off that ivy? free thine hand

From that unseemly wand, my mother's father!

This is thy work, Tiresias. This new God

Wilt thou instal 'mongst men, at higher price

To vend new auspices, and well paid offerings.

If thine old age were not thy safeguard, thou

Shouldst pine in chains among the Bacchanal  
women.

False teacher of new rites! For where 'mong women

The grape's sweet poison mingles with the feast,  
Nought holy may we augur of such worship.

*Chorus.* Oh impious! dost thou not revere the Gods,  
Nor Cadmus, who the earth-born harvest sowed?  
Echion's son! how dost thou shame thy lineage!

*Tiresias.* 'Tis easy to be eloquent, for him  
That's skilled in speech, and hath a stirring theme.  
Thou hast the flowing tongue as of a wise man,  
But there's no wisdom in thy fluent words;  
For the bold demagogue, powerful in speech,  
Is but a dangerous citizen lacking sense.  
This the new deity thou laugh'st to scorn,  
I may not say how mighty he will be  
Throughout all Hellas. Youth! there are two  
things

Man's primal need, Demeter, the boon Goddess  
(Or rather will ye call her Mother Earth?),  
With solid food maintains the race of man.  
He, on the other hand, the son of Semele,  
Found out the grape's rich juice, and taught us mortals  
That which beguiles the miserable of mankind  
Of sorrow, when they quaff the vine's rich stream.  
Sleep too, and drowsy oblivion of care  
He gives, all-healing medicine of our woes.  
He 'mong the gods is worshipped a great god,  
Author confessed to man of such rich blessings  
Him dost thou love to scorn, as in Jove's thigh  
Sewn up. This truth profound will I unfold:  
When Jove had snatched him from the lightning fire,  
He to Olympus bore the new-born babe.  
Stern Herè strove to thrust him out of heaven,  
But Jove encountered her with wiles divine:  
He clove off part of th' earth-encircling air,  
There Dionysus placed the pleasing hostage,  
Aloof from jealous Herè. So men said  
Hereafter he was cradled in Jove's thigh  
(From the assonance of words in our old tongue  
For thigh and hostage the wild fable grew).  
A prophet is our god, for Bacchanalism  
And madness are alike prophetic.  
And when the god comes down in all his power,  
He makes the mad to rave of things to come.

Of Ares he hath attributes : he the host  
In all its firm array and serried arms,  
With panic fear scatters, ere lance cross lance :  
From Dionysus springs this frenzy too.

And him shall we behold on Delphi's crags  
Leaping, with his pine torches lighting up  
The rifts of the twin-headed rock ; and shouting  
And shaking all around his Bacchic wand  
Great through all Hellas. Pentheus, be advised !  
Vaunt not thy power o'er man, even if thou thinkest  
That thou art wise (it is diseased, thy thought),  
Think it not ! In the land receive the god.  
Pour wine, and join the dance, and crown thy brows.  
Dionysus does not force our modest matrons  
To the soft Cyprian rites ; the chaste by nature  
Are not so cheated of their chastity.  
Think well of this, for in the Bacchic choir  
The holy woman will not be less holy.  
Thou'rt proud, when men to greet thee throng the gates,  
And the glad city welcomes Pentheus' name ;  
He too, I ween, delights in being honoured.

I, therefore, and old Cadmus whom thou mock'st,  
Will crown our heads with ivy, dance along  
An hoary pair—for dance perforce we must ;  
I war not with the gods. Follow my counsel ;  
Thou'rt at the height of madness, there's no medicine  
Can minister to disease so deep as thine.

*Chorus.* Old man ! thou sham'st not Phœbus thine own god.  
Wise art thou worshipping that great god Bromius.

*Cadmus.* My son ! Tiresias well hath counselled thee ;  
Dwell safe with us within the pale of law.  
Now thou fliest high : thy sense is void of sense.  
Even if, as thou declar'st, he were no god,  
Call thou him god. It were a splendid falsehood  
If Semele be thought t' have borne a god ;  
'Twere honour unto us and to our race.  
Hast thou not seen Actæon's wretched fate ?  
The dogs he bred, who fed from his own board,  
Rent him in wrath to pieces ; for he vaunted  
Than Artemis to be a mightier hunter.  
So do not thou : come, let me crown thine head  
With ivy, and with us adore the god.



*Pentheus.* Hold off thine hand ! Away ! Go rave and dance,  
 And wipe not off thy folly upon me.  
 On him, thy folly's teacher, I will wreak  
 Instant relentless justice. Some one go,  
 The seats from which he spies the flight of birds—  
 False augur—with the iron forks o'erthrow,  
 Scattering in wild confusion all abroad,  
 And cast his chaplets to the winds and storms ;  
 Thou'lt gall him thus, gall to the height of bitterness.  
 Ye to the city ! seek that stranger out,  
 That womanly man, who with this new disease  
 Afflicts our matrons, and defiles their beds :  
 Seize him and bring him hither straight in chains,  
 That he may suffer stoning, that dread death.  
 Such be his woful orgies here in Thebes.

*Tiresias.* Oh, miserable ! That know'st not what thou sayest,  
 Crazed wert thou, now thou'rt at the height of madness :  
 But go we, Cadmus, and pour forth our prayer,  
 Even for this savage and ungodly man,  
 And for our city, lest the god o'ertake us  
 With some strange vengeance.

Come with thy ivy staff,  
 Lean thou on me, and I will lean on thee :  
 'Twere sad for two old men to fall, yet go  
 We must, and serve great Bacchus, son of Jove.  
 What woe, O Cadmus, will this woe-named man  
 Bring to thine house ! I speak not now as prophet,  
 But a plain simple fact : fools still speak folly.

*Chorus.* Holy goddess ! Goddess old !  
 Holy ! thou the crown of gold  
 In the nether realm that wearest,  
 Pentheus' awful speech thou hearest,  
 Hearest his insulting tone  
 'Gainst Semele's immortal son,  
 Bromius, of gods the first and best.  
 At every gay and flower-crowned feast,  
 His the dance's jocund strife,  
 And the laughter with the fife,  
 Every care and grief to lull,  
 When the sparkling wine-cup full  
 Crowns the gods' banquets, or lets fall  
 Sweet sleep on the eyes of men at mortal festival.

## The Bacchanals

11

Of tongue unbridled without awe,  
Of madness spurning holy law,  
Sorrow is the Jove-doomed close ;  
But the life of calm repose  
And modest reverence holds her state  
Unbroken by disturbing fate ;  
And knits whole houses in the tie  
Of sweet domestic harmony.  
Beyond the range of mortal eyes  
'Tis not wisdom to be wise.  
Life is brief, the present clasp;  
Nor after some bright future grasp.  
Such were the wisdom, as I ween,  
Only of frantic and ill-counselled men.

Oh, would to Cyprus I might roam,  
Soft Aphrodite's isle,  
Where the young loves have their perennial  
home,  
That soothe men's hearts with tender guile :  
Or to that wondrous shore where ever  
The hundred-mouthed barbaric river  
Makes teem with wealth the showerless land !  
O lead me ! lead me, till I stand,  
Bromius !—sweet Bromius !—where high swelling  
Soars the Pierian muses' dwelling—  
Olympus' summit hoar and high—  
Thou revel-loving deity !  
For there are all the graces,  
And sweet desire is there,  
And to those hallowed places  
To lawful rites the Bacchanals repair.  
The deity, the son of Jove,  
The banquet is his joy,  
Peace, the wealth-giver, doth he love,  
That nurse of many a noble boy.  
Not the rich man's sole possessing ;  
To the poor the painless blessing  
Gives he of the wine-cup bright.  
Him he hates, who day and night,  
Gentle night, and gladsome day,  
Cares not thus to while away.

Be thou wisely unsevere !  
Shun the stern and the austere !

Follow the multitude ;  
Their usage still pursue !  
Their homely wisdom rude

(Such is my sentence) is both right and true.

*Officer.* Pentheus, we are here ! In vain we went not forth :

The prey which thou commandest we have taken.  
Gentle our quarry met us, nor turned back  
His foot in flight, but held out both his hands ;  
Became not pale, changed not his ruddy colour.  
Smiling he bade us bind, and lead him off,  
Stood still, and made our work a work of ease.  
Reverent I said, " Stranger, I arrest thee not  
Of mine own will, but by the king's command."  
But all the Bacchanals, whom thou hast seized  
And bound in chains within the public prison,  
All now have disappeared, released they are leaping  
In their wild orgies, hymning the god Bacchus.  
Spontaneous fell the chains from off their feet ;  
The bolts drew back untouched by mortal hand.  
In truth this man, with many wonders rife  
Comes to our Thebes. 'Tis thine t' ordain the rest.

*Pentheus.* Bind fast his hands ! Thus in his manacles  
Sharp must he be indeed to 'scape us now.  
There's beauty, stranger—woman-witching beauty  
(Therefore thou art in Thebes)—in thy soft form ;  
Thy fine bright hair, not coarse like the hard athlete's,  
Is mantling o'er thy cheek warm with desire ;  
And carefully thou hast cherished thy white skin ;  
Not in the sun's swart beams, but in cool shade,  
Wooing soft Aphrodite with thy loveliness.  
But tell me first, from whence hath sprung thy race ?

*Dionysus.* There needs no boast ; 'tis easy to tell this :  
All flowery Tmolus hast thou haply heard ?

*Pentheus.* Yea ; that which girds around the Sardinian city.

*Dionysus.* Thence am I come, my country Lydia.

*Pentheus.* Whence unto Hellas bringest thou thine orgies ?

*Dionysus.* Dionysus, son of Jove, hath hallowed them.

*Pentheus.* Is there a Jove then, that begets new gods ?

*Dionysus.* No, it was here he wedded Semele.

*Pentheus.* Hallowed he them by night, or in the eye of day ?

- Dionysus.* In open vision he revealed his orgies.
- Pentheus.* And what, then, is thine orgies' solemn form ;
- Dionysus.* That is not uttered to the uninitiate.
- Pentheus.* What profit, then, is theirs who worship him ?
- Dionysus.* Thou mayst not know, though precious were that knowledge.
- Pentheus.* A cunning tale, to make me long to hear thee.
- Dionysus.* The orgies of our god scorn impious worshippers.
- Pentheus.* Thou saw'st the manifest god ! What was his form ?
- Dionysus.* Whate'er he would : it was not mine to choose.
- Pentheus.* Cleverly blinked our question with no answer.
- Dionysus.* Who wiseliest speaks, to the fool speaks foolishness.
- Pentheus.* And hither com'st thou first with thy new god !
- Dionysus.* There's no Barbarian but adores these rites.
- Pentheus.* Being much less wise than we Hellenians.
- Dionysus.* In this more wise. Their customs differ much.
- Pentheus.* Performest thou these rites by night or day ?
- Dionysus.* Most part by night—night hath more solemn awe.
- Pentheus.* A crafty rotten plot to catch our women.
- Dionysus.* Even in the day bad men can do bad deeds.
- Pentheus.* Thou of thy wiles shalt pay the penalty.
- Dionysus.* Thou of thine ignorance—impious towards the gods !
- Pentheus.* He's bold, this Bacchus—ready enough in words.
- Dionysus.* What penalty ? what evil wilt thou do me ?
- Pentheus.* First will I clip away those soft bright locks.
- Dionysus.* My locks are holy, dedicate to my god.
- Pentheus.* Next, give thou me that thyrsus in thine hand.
- Dionysus.* Take it thyself ; 'tis Dionysus' wand.
- Pentheus.* I'll bind thy body in strong iron chains.
- Dionysus.* My god himself will loose them when he will.
- Pentheus.* When thou invok'st him 'mid thy Bacchanals.
- Dionysus.* Even now he is present ; he beholds me now.
- Pentheus.* Where is he then ? Mine eyes perceive him not.
- Dionysus.* Near me : the impious eyes may not discern him.
- Pentheus.* Seize on him, for he doth insult our Thebes.
- Dionysus.* I warn thee, bind me not ; the insane, the sane.
- Pentheus.* I, stronger than thou art, say I will bind thee.
- Dionysus.* Thou know'st not where thou art, or what thou art.

*Pentheus.* Pentheus, Agave's son, my sire Echion.

*Dionysus.* Thou hast a name whose very sound is woe.

*Pentheus.* Away, go bind him in our royal stable,

That he may sit in midnight gloom profound  
There lead thy dance! But those thou hast hither  
led,

Thy guilt's accomplices, we'll sell for slaves;

Or, silencing their noise and beating drums,  
As handmaids to the distaff set them down.

*Dionysus.* Away then! 'Tis not well I bear such wrong;

The vengeance for this outrage he will wreak

Whose being thou deniest, Dionysus:

Outraging me, ye bind him in your chains.

*Chorus.* Holy virgin-haunted water

Ancient Achelous' daughter!

Dirce! in thy crystal wave

Thou the child of Jove didst lave.

Thou, when Zeus, his awful sire,  
Snatched him from the immortal fire;

And locked him up within his thigh,

With a loud but gentle cry—

"Come, my Dithyrambus, come,  
Enter thou the masculine womb!"

Lo! to Thebes I thus proclaim,  
"Twice born!" thus thy mystic name.

Blessed Dirce! dost thou well

From thy green marge to repel

Me, and all my jocund round,

With their ivy garlands crowned.

Why dost fly me?

Why deny me?

By all the joys of wine I swear,

Bromius still shall be my care.

Oh, what pride! pride unforgiven

Manifests, against high heaven

Th' earth-born, whom in mortal birth

'Gat Echion, son of earth;

Pentheus of the dragon brood,

Not of human flesh and blood;

But potent dire, like him whose pride,

The Titan, all the gods defied.

## The Bacchanals

15

Me, great Bromius' handmaid true ;  
Me, with all my festive crew,  
Thralled in chains he still would keep  
In his palace dungeon deep.

Seest thou this, O son of Jove,  
Dionysus, from above ?

Thy wrapt prophets dost thou see  
At strife with dark necessity ?

The golden wand  
In thy right hand.

Come, come thou down Olympus' side,  
And quell the bloody tyrant in his pride.

Art thou holding revel now  
On Nysa's wild beast-haunted brow ?  
Is't thy Thyasus that clammers  
O'er Corycia's mountain chambers ?  
Or on Olympus, thick with wood,  
With his harp where Orpheus stood,  
And led the forest trees along,  
Led the wild beasts with his song.

O Pieria, blessed land,  
Evius hallows thee, advancing,  
With his wild choir's mystic dancing,

Over rapid Axius' strand  
He shall pass ; o'er Lydia's tide  
Then his whirling Mænads guide.  
Lydia, parent boon of health,  
Give to man of boundless wealth ;  
Washing many a sunny mead,  
Where the prancing coursers feed.

*Dionysus.* What ho ! what ho ! ye Bacchanals  
Rouse and wake ! your master calls.

*Chorus.* Who is here ? and what is he  
That calls upon our wandering train ?

*Dionysus.* What ho ! what ho ! I call again !

The son of Jove and Semele.

*Chorus.* What ho ! what ho ! our lord and master :  
Come, with footsteps fast and faster,  
Join our revel ! Bromius, speed,  
Till quakes the earth beneath our tread.

Alas ! alas !

Soon shall Pentheus' palace wall  
Shake and crumble to its fall.

*Dionysus.* Bacchus treads the palace floor !  
Adore him !

*Chorus.* Oh ! we do adore !  
Behold ! behold !

The pillars with their weight above,  
Of ponderous marble, shake and move.  
Hark ! the trembling roof within  
Bacchus shouts his mighty din.

*Dionysus.* The kindling lamp of the dark lightning bring !  
Fire, fire the palace of the guilty king.

*Chorus.* Behold ! behold ! it flames ! Do ye not see,  
Around the sacred tomb of Semele,  
The blaze, that left the lightning there,  
When Jove's red thunder fired the air ?  
On the earth, supine and low,  
Your shuddering limbs, ye Mænads, throw !  
The king, the Jove-born god, destroying all,  
In widest ruin strews the palace wall.

*Dionysus.* O, ye Barbarian women, Thus prostrate in dismay ;  
Upon the earth ye've fallen ! See ye not, as ye may,  
How Bacchus Pentheus' palace In wrath hath shaken  
down ?

Rise up ! rise up ! take courage — Shake off that  
trembling swoon.

*Chorus.* O light that goodliest shinest Over our mystic rite,  
In state forlorn we saw thee — Saw with what deep  
affright !

*Dionysus.* How to despair ye yielded As I boldly entered in  
To Pentheus, as if captured, Into the fatal gin.

*Chorus.* How could I less ? Who guards us If thou shouldst  
come to woe ?

But how wast thou delivered From thy ungodly foe ?

*Dionysus.* Myself, myself delivered, With ease and effort  
slight.

*Chorus.* Thy hands, had he not bound them, In halters  
strong and tight ?

*Dionysus.* 'Twas even then I mocked him : He thought me  
in his chain ;

He touched me not, nor reached me ; His idle  
thoughts were vain !

## The Bacchanals

17

In the stable stood a heifer, Where he thought he had  
me bound :

Round the beast's knees his cords And cloven hoofs  
he wound.

Wrath-breathing, from his body The sweat fell like a  
flood :

He bit his lips in fury, While I beside who stood  
Looked on in unmoved quiet.

As at that instant come,  
Shook Bacchus the strong palace, And on his mother's  
tomb

Flames kindled. When he saw it, On fire the palace  
deeming,

Hither he rushed and thither, For "water, water,"  
screaming ;

And every slave 'gan labour, But laboured all in vain.  
The toil he soon abandoned. As though I had fled  
amain

He rushed into the palace : In his hand the dark  
sword gleamed.

Then, as it seemed, great Bromius—I say, but as it  
seemed—

In the hall a bright light kindled. On that he rushed,  
and there,

As slaying me in vengeance, Stood stabbing the thin  
air.

But then the avenging Bacchus Wrought new calam-  
ities ;

From roof to base that palace In smouldering ruin lies.  
Bitter ruing our imprisonment, With toil forspent he  
threw

On earth his useless weapon. Mortal, he had dared  
to do

'Gainst a god unholy battle. But I, in quiet state,  
Unheeding Pentheus' anger, Came through the palace  
gate.

It seems even now his sandal Is sounding on its way :  
Soon is he here before us, And what now will he  
say ?

With ease will I confront him, Ire-breathing though  
he stand.

'Tis easy to a wise man To practise self-command.



*Pentheus.* I am outraged — mocked ! The stranger hath escaped me

Whom I so late had bound in iron chains.

Off, off ! • He is here ! — the man ? How's this ?

How stands he

Before our palace, as just issuing forth ?

*Dionysus.* Stay thou thy step ! Subdue thy wrath to peace !

*Pentheus.* How, having burst thy chains, hast thou come forth ?

*Dionysus.* Said I not — heardst thou not ? “ There's one will free me ! ”

*Pentheus.* What one ? Thou speakest still words new and strange.

*Dionysus.* He who for man plants the rich-tendrilled vine.

*Pentheus.* Well layest thou this reproach on Dionysus.

Without there, close and bar the towers around !

*Dionysus.* What ! and the gods ! O'erleap they not all walls ?

*Pentheus.* Wise in all wisdom save in that thou shouldst have !

*Dionysus.* In that I should have wisest still am I.

But listen first, and hear the words of him

Who comes to thee with tidings from the mountains

Here will we stay. Fear not, we will not fly !

*Messenger.* Pentheus, that rulest o'er this land of Thebes !

I come from high Cithæron, ever white

With the bright glittering snow's perennial rays.

*Pentheus.* Why com'st thou ? On what pressing mission bound ?

*Messenger.* I've seen the frenzied Bacchanals, who had fled

On their white feet, forth goaded from the land.

I come to tell to thee and to this city

The awful deeds they do, surpassing wonder.

But answer first if I shall freely say

All that's done there, or furl my prudent speech ;

For thy quick temper I do fear, O king,

Thy sharp resentment and o'er-royal pride.

*Pentheus.* Speak freely. Thou shalt part unharmed by me ;

Wrath were not seemly 'gainst the unoffending.

But the more awful what thou sayst of these

Mad women, I the more on him who hath guiled them

To their wild life, will wreak my just revenge.

*Messenger.* Mine herds of heifers I was driving, slow

Winding their way along the mountain crags,

When the sun pours his full beams on the earth.  
 I saw three bands, three choirs of women : one  
 Autonoe led, thy mother led the second,  
 Agave—and the third Ino : and all •  
 Quietly slept, their languid limbs stretched out :  
 Some resting on the ash-trees' stem their tresses ;  
 Some with their heads upon the oak-leaves thrown  
 Careless, but not immodest ; as thou sayest,  
 That drunken with the goblet and shrill fife  
 In the dusk woods they prowled for lawless love.  
 Thy mother, as she heard the horned steers  
 Deep lowing, stood up 'mid the Bacchanals  
 And shouted loud to wake them from their rest.  
 They from their lids shaking the freshening sleep,  
 Rose upright, wonderous in their decent guise,  
 The young, the old, the maiden yet unwed.  
 And first they loosed their locks over their shoulders,  
 Their fawn-skins fastened, wheresoe'er the clasps  
 Had lost their hold, and all the dappled furs  
 With serpents bound, that lolled out their lithe tongues.  
 Some in their arms held kid, or wild-wolf's cub,  
 Suckling it with her white milk ; all the young mothers  
 Who had left their new-born babes, and stood with  
 breasts  
 Full swelling : and they all put on their crowns  
 Of ivy, oak, or flowering eglantine.  
 One took a thyrsus wand, and struck the rock,  
 Leaped forth at once a dewy mist of water ;  
 And one her rod plunged deep in the earth, and there  
 The god sent up a fountain of bright wine.  
 And all that longed for the white blameless draught  
 Light scraping with their finger-ends the soil  
 Had streams of exquisite milk ; the ivy wands  
 Distilled from all their tops rich store of honey.  
 Hadst thou been there, seeing these things, the god  
 Thou now revilst thou hadst adored with prayer.  
 And we, herdsmen and shepherds, gathered around.  
 And there was strife among us in our words  
 Of these strange things they did, these marvellous  
 things.  
 One city-bred, a glib and practised speaker,  
 Addressed us thus : " Ye that inhabit here

## Euripides

The holy mountain slopes, shall we not chase  
 Agave, Pentheus' mother, from the Bacchanals,  
 And win the royal favour?" Well to us  
 He seemed to speak; so, crouched in the thick bushes,  
 We lay in ambush. They at the appointed hour  
 Shook their wild thyrsi in the Bacchic dance,  
 "Iacchus" with one voice, the son of Jove,  
 "Bromius" invoking. The hills danced with them;  
 And the wild beasts; was nothing stood unmoved.

And I leaped forth, as though to seize on her,  
 Leaving the sedge where I had hidden myself.  
 But she shrieked out, "Ho, my swift-footed dogs!  
 These men would hunt us down, but follow me—  
 Follow me, all your hands with thyrsi armed."  
 We fled amain, or by the Bacchanals  
 We had been torn in pieces. They, with hands  
 Unarmed with iron, rushed on the browsing steers.  
 One ye might see a young and vigorous heifer  
 Hold, lowing in her grasp, like prize of war.  
 And some were tearing asunder the young calves;  
 And ye might see the ribs or cloven hoofs  
 Hurled wildly up and down, and mangled skins  
 Were hanging from the ash boughs, dropping blood.  
 The wanton bulls, proud of their tossing horns  
 Of yore, fell stumbling, staggering to the ground,  
 Dragged down by the strong hands of thousand  
 maidens.

And swifter were the entrails torn away  
 Than drop the lids over your royal eyeballs.

Like birds that skim the earth, they glide along  
 O'er the wide plains, that by Asopus' streams  
 Shoot up for Thebes the rich and yellow corn;  
 And Hysiaë and Erythræ, that beneath  
 Cithæron's crag dwell lowly, like fierce foes  
 Invading, all with ravage waste and wide  
 Confounded; infants snatched from their sweet  
 homes;

And what they threw across their shoulders, clung  
 Unfastened, nor fell down to the black ground.  
 No brass, nor ponderous iron: on their locks  
 Was fire that burned them not. Of those they spoiled  
 Some in their sudden fury rushed to arms.

Then was a mightier wonder seen, O king :  
 From them the pointed lances drew no blood  
 But they their thyrsi hurling, javelin-like,  
 Drave all before, and smote their shameful backs :  
 Women drave men, but not without the god.

So did they straight return from whence they came,  
 Even to the fountains, which the god made flow ;  
 Washed off the blood, and from their cheeks the drops  
 The serpents licked, and made them bright and clean.  
 This godhead then, whoe'er he be, my master !  
 Receive within our city. Great in all things,  
 In this I hear men say he is the greatest—  
 He hath given the sorrow-soothing vine to man  
 For where wine is not love will never be,  
 Nor any other joy of human life.

*Chorus.* I am afraid to speak the words of freedom  
 Before the tyrant, yet it must be said :  
 "Inferior to no god is Dionysus."

*Pentheus.* 'Tis here then, like a wild fire, burning on,  
 This Bacchic insolence, Hellas' deep disgrace.  
 Off with delay ! Go to the Electrian gates  
 And summon all that bear the shield, and all  
 The cavalry upon their prancing steeds,  
 And those that couch the lance, and of the bow  
 Twang the sharp string. Against these Bacchanals  
 We will go war. It were indeed too much  
 From women to endure what we endure.

*Dionysus.* Thou wilt not be persuaded by my words  
 Pentheus ! Yet though of thee I have suffered  
 wrong

I warn thee, rise not up against the god.  
 Rest thou in peace. Bromius will never brook  
 Ye drive his Mænads from their mountain haunts.

*Pentheus.* Wilt teach me ? Better fly and save thyself,  
 Ere yet I wreak stern justice upon thee.

*Dionysus.* Rather do sacrifice, than in thy wrath  
 Kick 'gainst the pricks—a mortal 'gainst a god.

*Pentheus.* I'll sacrifice, and in Cithæron's glens,  
 As they deserve, a hecatomb of women.

*Dionysus.* Soon will ye fly. 'Twere shame that shields of  
 brass  
 Before the Bacchic thyrsi turn in rout.

*Pentheus.* I am bewildered by this dubious stranger ;  
Doing or suffering, he holds not his peace.

*Dionysus.* My friend ! Thou still mayest bring this to good end. •

*Pentheus.* How so ? By being the slave of mine own slaves ?

*Dionysus.* These women—without force of arms, I'll bring them.

*Pentheus.* Alas ! he is plotting now some wile against me !

*Dionysus.* But what if I could save thee by mine arts ?

*Pentheus.* Ye are all in league, that ye may hold your orgies.

*Dionysus.* I am in a league 'tis true, but with the god !

*Pentheus.* Bring out mine armour ! Thou, have done thy speech !

*Dionysus.* Ha ! wouldst thou see them seated on the mountains ?

*Pentheus.* Ay ! for the sight give thousand weight of gold.

*Dionysus.* Why hast thou fallen upon this strange desire ?

*Pentheus.* 'Twere grief to see them in their drunkenness.

*Dionysus.* Yet gladly wouldst thou see, what see would grieve thee.

*Pentheus.* Mark well ! in silence seated 'neath the ash-trees.

*Dionysus.* But if thou goest in secret they will scent thee

*Pentheus.* Best openly, in this thou hast said well. •

*Dionysus.* But if we lead thee, wilt thou dare the way ?

*Pentheus.* Lead on, and swiftly ! Let no time be lost !

*Dionysus.* But first enwrap thee in these linen robes

*Pentheus.* What, will he of a man make me a woman !

*Dionysus.* Lest they should kill thee, seeing thee as a man.

*Pentheus.* Well dost thou speak ; so spake the wise of old.

*Dionysus.* Dionysus hath instructed me in this.

*Pentheus.* How then can we best do what thou advisest ?

*Dionysus.* I'll enter in the house, and there array thee.

*Pentheus.* What dress ? A woman's ? I am ashamed to wear it.

*Dionysus.* Art thou not eager to behold the Mænads ?

*Pentheus.* And what dress sayst thou I must wrap around me ?

*Dionysus.* I'll smooth thine hair down lightly on thy brow.

*Pentheus.* What is the second portion of my dress ?

*Dionysus.* Robes to thy feet, a bonnet on thine head.

*Pentheus.* Wilt thou array me then in more than this ?

*Dionysus.* A thyrsus in thy hand, a dappled fawn-skin.

*Pentheus.* I cannot clothe me in a woman's dress.

*Dionysus.* Thou wilt have bloodshed, warring on the Mænads.

*Pentheus.* 'Tis right, I must go first survey the field.

*Dionysus.* 'Twere wiser than to hunt evil with evil.

*Pentheus.* How pass the city, unseen of the Thebans ?

*Dionysus.* We'll go by lone byways ; I'll lead thee safe.

*Pentheus.* Aught better than be mocked by these loose  
Bacchanals.

When we come back, we'll counsel what were best.

*Dionysus.* Even as you will : I am here at your command.

*Pentheus.* So let us on ; I must go forth in arms,

Or follow the advice thou givest me.

*Dionysus.* Women ! this man is in our net ; he goes

To find his just doom 'mid the Bacchanals.

Dionysus, to thy work ! thou'rt not far off ;

Vengeance is ours. Bereave him first of sense :

Yet be his frenzy slight. In his right mind

He never had put on a woman's dress ;

But now, thus shaken in his mind, he'll wear it.

A laughing-stock I'll make him to all Thebes,

Led in a woman's dress through the wide city.

For those fierce threats in which he was so great.

But I must go, and Pentheus—in the garb

Which wearing, even by his own mother's hand

Slain, he goes down to Hades. Know he must

Dionysus, son of Jove, among the gods

Mightiest, yet mildest to the sons of men.

*Chorus.* O when, through the long night,

With fleet foot glancing white,

Shall I go dancing in my revelry,

My neck cast back, and bare

Unto the dewy air,

Like sportive fawn in the green meadow's glee ?

Lo, in her fear she springs

Over th' encircling rings,

Over the well-woven nets far off and fast ;

While swift along her track

The huntsman cheers his pack,

With panting toil, and fiery storm-wind haste.

Where down the river-bank spreads the wide meadow,

Rejoices she in the untrod solitude.

Couches at length beneath the silent shadow

Of the old hospitable wood.

## Euripides

What is wisest? what is fairest,  
 Of god's boons to man the rarest?  
 With the conscious conquering hand  
 Above the foeman's head to stand.  
 What is fairest still is dearest.

Slow come, but come at length,  
 In their majestic strength  
 Faithful and true, the avenging deities:  
 And chastening human folly,  
 And the mad pride unholy,  
 Of those who to the gods bow not their knees.  
 For hidden still and mute,  
 As glides their printless foot,  
 The impious on their winding path they hound  
 For it is ill to know,  
 And it is ill to do,  
 Beyond the law's inexorable bound.  
 'Tis but light cost in his own power sublime  
 To array the godhead, whosoe'er he be;  
 And law is old, even as the oldest time,  
 Nature's own unrepealed decree.

What is wisest? what is fairest,  
 Of god's boons to man the rarest?  
 With the conscious conquering hand  
 Above the foeman's head to stand  
 What is fairest still is rarest. •

Who hath 'scaped the turbulent sea,  
 And reached the haven, happy he!  
 Happy he whose toils are o'er,  
 In the race of wealth and power!  
 This one here, and that one there,  
 Passes by, and everywhere  
 Still expectant thousands over  
 Thousands hopes are seen to hover,  
 Some to mortals end in bliss;  
 Some have already fled away:  
 Happiness alone is his  
 That happy is to-day.

*Dionysus.* Thou art mad to see that which thou shouldst not see,

And covetous of that thou shouldst not covet.  
Pentheus! I say, come forth! Appear before me,  
Clothed in the Bacchic Mænads' womanly dress;  
Spy on thy mother and her holy crew,  
Come like in form to one of Cadmus' daughters.

*Pentheus.* Ha! now indeed two suns I seem to see,  
A double Thebes, two seven-gated cities;  
Thou, as a bull, seemest to go before me,  
And horns have grown upon thine head. Art thou  
A beast indeed? Thou seem'st a very bull.

*Dionysus.* The god is with us; unpropitious once,  
But now at truce: now seest thou what thou shouldst  
see?

*Pentheus.* What see I? Is not that the step of Ino?  
And is not Agave there, my mother?

*Dionysus.* Methinks 'tis even they whom thou behold'st;  
But lo! this tress hath strayed out of its place,  
Not as I braided it, beneath thy bonnet.

*Pentheus.* Tossing it this way now, now tossing that,  
In Bacchic glee, I have shaken it from its place.

*Dionysus.* But we, whose charge it is to watch o'er thee,  
Will braid it up again. Lift up thy head.

*Pentheus.* Braid as thou wilt, we yield ourselves to thee.

*Dionysus.* Thy zone is loosened, and thy robe's long folds  
Droop outward, nor conceal thine ankles now.

*Pentheus.* Around my right foot so it seems, yet sure  
Around the other it sits close and well.

*Dionysus.* Wilt thou not hold me for thy best of friends,  
Thus strangely seeing the coy Bacchanals?

*Pentheus.* The thyrsus—in my right hand shall I hold it?  
Or thus am I more like a Bacchanal?

*Dionysus.* In thy right hand, and with thy right foot raise it.  
I praise the change of mind now come o'er thee.

*Pentheus.* Could I not now bear up upon my shoulders  
Cithæron's crag, with all the Bacchanals?

*Dionysus.* Thou couldst if 'twere thy will. In thy right mind  
Erewhile thou wast not; now thou art as thou  
shouldst be.

*Pentheus.* Shall I take levers, pluck it up with my hands,  
Or thrust mine arm or shoulder 'neath its base?





He is not of woman's blood—  
     The lioness !  
 Or the Lybian Gorgon's brood ?  
 Come, vengeance, come, display thee !  
 With thy bright sword array thee !  
     The bloody sentence wreak  
     On the dissevered neck  
 Of him who god, law, justice hath not known,  
     Echion's earth-born son.  
 He, with thought unrighteous and unholy pride,  
 'Gainst Bacchus and his mother, their orgies' mystic  
     mirth  
     Still holds his frantic strife,  
 And sets him up against the god, deeming it light  
     To vanquish the invincible of might.  
 Hold thou fast the pious mind ; so, only so, shall glide  
 In peace with gods above, in peace with men on earth,  
     Thy smooth painless life.  
 I admire not, envy not, who would be otherwise :  
 Mine be still the glory, mine be still the prize,  
     By night and day  
 • To live of the immortal gods in awe ;  
     Who fears them not  
 Is but the outcast of all law.  
 Come, vengeance, come display thee !  
 With thy bright sword array thee !  
     The bloody sentence wreak  
 • On the dissevered neck  
 Of him who god, law, justice has not known,  
     Echion's earth-born son.  
     Appear ! appear !  
     Or as the stately steer !  
     Or many-headed dragon be !  
 Or the fire-breathing lion, terrible to see.  
 Come, Bacchus, come 'gainst the hunter of the Bac-  
     chanals,  
     Even now, now as he falls  
 Upon the Mænads' fatal herd beneath,  
     With smiling brow,  
     Around him throw  
 The inexorable net of death.

*Messenger.* O house most prosperous once throughout all Hellas!

House of the old Sidonian!—in this land  
Who sowed the dragon's serpent's earth-born harvest—  
How I deplore thee! I a slave, for still  
Grieve for their master's sorrows faithful slaves.

*Chorus.* What's this? Aught new about the Bacchanals?

*Messenger.* Pentheus hath perished, old Echion's son.

*Chorus.* King Bromius, thou art indeed a mighty god!

*Messenger.* What sayst thou? How is this? Rejoicest thou,  
O woman, in my master's awful fate?

*Chorus.* Light chants the stranger her barbarous strains;  
I cower not in fear for the menace of chains.

*Messenger.* All Thebes thus void of courage deemest thou?

*Chorus.* O Dionysus! Dionysus! Thebes  
Hath o'er me now no power.

*Messenger.* 'Tis pardonable, yet it is not well,  
Woman, in others' miseries to rejoice.

*Chorus.* Tell me, then, by what fate died the unjust—  
The man, the dark contriver of injustice?

*Messenger.* Therapnæ having left the Theban city,  
And passed along Asopus' winding shore,  
We 'gan to climb Cithæron's upward steep—  
Pentheus and I (I waited on my lord),  
And he that led us on our quest, the stranger—  
And first we crept along a grassy glade,  
With silent footsteps, and with silent tongues  
Slow moving, as to see, not being seen.  
There was a rock-walled glen, watered by a streamlet,  
And shadowed o'er with pines; the Mænads there  
Sate, all their hands busy with pleasant toil;  
And some the leafy thyrsus, that its ivy  
Had dropped away, were garlanding anew;  
Like fillies some, unharnessed from the yoke;  
Chanted alternate all the Bacchic hymn.  
Ill-fated Pentheus, as he scarce could see  
That womanly troop, spake thus: "Where we stand,  
stranger,  
We see not well the unseemly Mænad dance:  
But, mounting on a bank, or a tall tree,  
Clearly shall I behold their deeds of shame."  
A wonder then I saw that stranger do.

He seized an ash-tree's high heaven-reaching stem,  
 And dragged it down, dragged, dragged to the low  
 earth ;  
 And like a bow it bent. As a curved wheel  
 Becomes a circle in the turner's lathe,  
 The stranger thus that mountain tree bent down  
 To the earth, a deed of more than mortal strength.  
 Then seating Pentheus on those ash-tree boughs,  
 Upward he let it rise, steadily, gently  
 Through his hands, careful lest it shake him off ;  
 And slowly rose it upright to its height,  
 Bearing my master seated on its ridge.  
 There was he seen, rather than saw the Mænads,  
 More visible he could not be, seated aloft.  
 The stranger from our view had vanished quite.  
 Then from the heavens a voice, as it should seem  
 Dionysus, shouted loud, " Behold ! I bring,  
 O maidens, him that you and me, our rites,  
 Our orgies laughed to scorn; now take your vengeance."  
 And as he spake, a light of holy fire  
 Stood up, and blazed from earth straight up to heaven.  
 Silent the air, silent the verdant grove  
 Held its still leaves ; no sound of living thing.  
 They, as their ears just caught the half-heard voice,  
 Stood up erect, and rolled their wondering eyes.  
 Again he shouted. But when Cadmus' daughters  
 Heard manifest the god's awakening voice,  
 Forth rushed they, fleeter than the wingéd dove,  
 Their nimble feet quick coursing up and down.  
 Agave first, his mother, then her kin,  
 The Mænads, down the torrents' bed, in the grove,  
 From crag to crag they leaped, mad with the god.  
 And first with heavy stones they hurled at him,  
 Climbing a rock in front ; the branches some  
 Of the ash-tree darted ; some like javelins  
 Sent their sharp thyrsi through the sounding air,  
 Pentheus their mark : but yet they struck him not ;  
 His height still baffled all their eager wrath.  
 There sat the wretch, helpless in his despair.  
 The oaken boughs, by lightning as struck off,  
 Roots torn from the earth, but with no iron wedge,  
 They hurled, but their wild labours all were vain.

Agave spake, "Come all, and stand around,  
And grasp the tree, ye Mænads ; soon we will seize  
The beast that rides thereon. He will ne'er betray  
The mysteries of our god." A thousand hands  
Were on the ash, and tore it from the earth :  
And he that sat aloft, down, headlong, down  
Fell to the ground, with thousand piteous shrieks,  
Pentheus, for well he knew his end was near.

· His mother first began the sacrifice,  
And fell on him. His bonnet from his hair  
He threw, that she might know and so not slay him,  
The sad Agave. And he said, her cheek  
Fondling, "I am thy child, thine own, my mother !  
Pentheus, whom in Echion's house you bare.  
Have mercy on me, mother ! For his sins,  
Whatever be his sins, kill not thy son."  
She, foaming at the mouth, her rolling eyeballs  
Whirling around, in her unreasoning reason,  
By Bacchus all possessed, knew, heeded not.  
She caught him in her arms, seized his right hand,  
And, with her feet set on his shrinking side,  
Tore out the shoulder—not with her own strength :  
The god made easy that too cruel deed.       ·  
And Ino laboured on the other side,  
Rending the flesh : Autonoe, all the rest,  
Pressed fiercely on, and there was one wild din—  
He groaning deep, while he had breath to groan,  
They shouting triumph ; and one bore an arm,  
One a still-sandalled foot ; and both his sides  
Lay open, rent. Each in her bloody hand  
Tossed wildly to and fro lost Pentheus' limbs.  
The trunk lay far aloof, 'neath the rough rocks  
Part, part amid the forest's thick-strewn leaves  
Not easy to be found. The wretched head,  
Which the mad mother, seizing in her hands  
Had on a thyrsus fixed, she bore aloft  
All o'er Cithæron, as a mountain lion's,  
Leading her sisters in their Mænad dance.  
And she comes vaunting her ill-fated chase  
Unto these walls, invoking Bacchus still,  
Her fellow-hunter, partner in her prey,  
Her triumph—triumph soon to end in tears !

I fled the sight of that dark tragedy,  
Hastening, ere yet Agave reached the palace.  
Oh ! to be reverent, to adore the gods,  
This is the noblest, wisest course of man,  
Taking dread warning from this dire event.

*Chorus.* Dance and sing  
In Bacchic ring,  
Shout, shout the fate, the fate of gloom,  
Of Pentheus, from the dragon born ;  
He the woman's garb hath worn,  
Following the bull, the harbinger, that led him to his doom.  
O ye Theban Bacchanals !  
Attune ye now the hymn victorious,  
The hymn all glorious,  
To the tear, and to the groan !  
Oh game of glory !  
To bathe the hands besprent and gory,  
In the blood of her own son.  
But I behold Agave, Pentheus' mother,  
Nearing the palace with distorted eyes.  
Hail we the ovation of the Evian god.

*Agave.* O ye Asian Bacchanals !

*Chorus.* Who is she on us who calls ?

*Agave.* From the mountains, lo ! we bear  
To the palace gate  
Our new-slain quarry fair.

*Chorus.* I see, I see ! and on thy joy I wait.

*Agave.* Without a net, without a snare,  
The lion's cub, I took him there

*Chorus.* In the wilderness, or where ?

*Agave.* Cithæron—

*Chorus.* Of Cithæron what ?

*Agave.* Gave him to slaughter.

*Chorus.* O blest Agave !

*Agave.* In thy song extol me,

*Chorus.* Who struck him first ?

*Agave.* Mine, mine, the glorious lot.

*Chorus.* Who else ?

*Agave.* Of Cadmus—

*Chorus.* What of Cadmus' daughter ?

*Agave.* With me, with me, did all the race  
Hound the prey.

*Chorus.* O fortunate chase!

*Agave.* The banquet share with me!

*Chorus.* Alas! what shall our banquet be?

*Agave.* How delicate the kid and young!

The thin locks have but newly sprung  
Over his forehead fair.

*Chorus.* 'Tis beauteous as the tame beasts' cherished hair.

*Agave.* Bacchus, hunter known to fame!

Did he not our Mænads bring  
On the track of this proud game?

A mighty hunter is our king!

Praise me! praise me!

*Chorus.* Praise I not thee?

*Agave.* Soon with the Thebans all, the hymn of praise

Pentheus my son will to his mother raise:

For she the lion prey hath won,

A noble deed and nobly done.

*Chorus.* Dost thou rejoice?

*Agave.* Ay, with exulting voice

My great, great deed I elevate,

Glorious as great.

*Chorus.* Sad woman, to the citizens of Thebes

Now show the conquered prey thou bearest hither.

*Agave.* Ye that within the high-towered Theban city

Dwell, come and gaze ye all upon our prey,

The mighty beast by Cadmus' daughter ta'en;

Nor with Thessalian sharp-pointed javelins,

Nor nets, but with the white and delicate palms

Of our own hands. Go ye, and make your boast,

Trusting to the spear-maker's useless craft:

We with these hands have ta'en our prey, and rent

The mangled limbs of this grim beast asunder.

Where is mine aged sire? Let him draw near!

And where is my son Pentheus? Let him mount

On the broad stairs that rise before our house;

And on the triglyph nail this lion's head,

That I have brought him from our splendid chase.

*Cadmus.* Follow me, follow, bearing your sad burthen,

My servants—Pentheus' body—to our house;

The body that with long and weary search

I found at length in lone Cithæron's glens;

Thus torn, not lying in one place, but wide

Scattered amid the dark and tangled thicket.  
 Already, as I entered in the city  
 With old Tiresias, from the Bacchanals,  
 I heard the fearful doings of my daughter.  
 And back returning to the mountain, bear  
 My son, thus by the furious Mænads slain.  
 Her who Actæon bore to Aristæus,  
 Autonoe, I saw, and Ino with her  
 Still in the thicket goaded with wild madness.  
 And some one said that on her dancing feet  
 Agave had come hither—true he spoke ;  
 I see her now—O most unblessed sight !

*Agave.* Father, 'tis thy peculiar peerless boast  
 Of womanhood the noblest t' have begot—  
 Me—me the noblest of that noble kin.  
 For I the shuttle and the distaff left  
 For mightier deeds — wild beasts with mine own  
 hands

To capture. Lo ! I bear within mine arms  
 These glorious trophies, to be hung on high  
 Upon thy house : receive them, O my father !  
 Call thy friends to the banquet feast ! Blest thou !  
 Most blest, through us who have wrought such  
 splendid deeds.

*Cadmus.* Measureless grief ! Eye may not gaze on it,  
 The slaughter wrought by those most wretched hands.  
 Oh ! what a sacrifice before the gods !  
 All Thebes, and us, thou callest to the feast.  
 Justly—too justly, hath King Bromius  
 Destroyed us, fatal kindred to our house.

*Agave.* Oh ! how morose is man in his old age,  
 And sullen in his mien. Oh ! were my son  
 More like his mother, mighty in his hunting,  
 When he goes forth among the youth of Thebes  
 Wild beasts to chase ! But he is great alone,  
 In warring on the gods. We two, my sire,  
 Must counsel him against his evil wisdom.  
 Where is he ? Who will call him here before us  
 That he may see me in my happiness ?

*Cadmus.* Woe ! woe ! When ye have sense of what ye have  
 done,  
 With what deep sorrow, sorrow ye ! To th' end,



Oh ! could ye be, only as now ye are,  
Nor happy were ye deemed, nor miserable.

*Agave.* What is not well ? For sorrow what the cause ?

*Cadmus.* First lift thine eyes up to the air around.

*Agave.* Behold ! Why thus commandest me to gaze ?

*Cadmus.* Is all the same ? Appears there not a change ?

*Agave.* 'Tis brighter, more translucent than before.

*Cadmus.* Is there the same elation in thy soul ?

*Agave.* I know not what thou mean'st ; but I become  
Conscious—my changing mind is settling down.

*Cadmus.* Canst thou attend, and plainly answer me ?

*Agave.* I have forgotten, father, all I said.

*Cadmus.* Unto whose bed wert thou in wedlock given ?

*Agave.* Echion's, him they call the Dragon-born.

*Cadmus.* Who was the son to thy husband thou didst bear ?

*Agave.* Pentheus, in commerce 'twixt his sire and me.

*Cadmus.* And whose the head thou holdest in thy hands ?

*Agave.* A lion's ; thus my fellow-hunters said.

*Cadmus.* Look at it straight : to look on't is no toil.

*Agave.* What see I ? Ha ! what's this within my hands ?

*Cadmus.* Look on't again, again : thou wilt know too well.

*Agave.* I see the direst woe that eye may see.

*Cadmus.* The semblance of a lion bears it now ?

*Agave.* No : wretch, wretch that I am ; 'tis Pentheus' head !

*Cadmus.* Even ere yet recognised thou might'st have mourned  
him.

*Agave.* Who murdered him ? How came he in my hands ?

*Cadmus.* Sad truth ! Untimely dost thou ever come !

*Agave.* Speak ; for my heart leaps with a boding throb.

*Cadmus.* 'Twas thou didst slay him, thou and thine own sisters.

*Agave.* Where died he ? In his palace ? In what place ?

*Cadmus.* There where the dogs Actæon tore in pieces.

*Agave.* Why to Cithæron went the ill-fated man ?

*Cadmus.* To mock the god, to mock the orgies there.

*Agave.* But how and wherefore had we thither gone ?

*Cadmus.* In madness !—the whole city maddened with thee.

*Agave.* Dionysus hath destroyed us ! Late I learn it.

*Cadmus.* Mocked with dread mockery ; no god ye held him.

*Agave.* Father ! Where's the dear body of my son ?

*Cadmus.* I bear it here, not found without much toil,

*Agave.* Are all the limbs together, sound and whole ?

And Pentheus, shared he in my desperate fury ?

*Cadmus.* Like thee he was, he worshipped not the god.  
 All, therefore, are enwrapt in one dread doom.  
 You, he, in whom hath perished all our house,  
 And I who, childless of male offspring, see  
 This single fruit—O miserable!—of thy womb  
 Thus shamefully, thus lamentably dead—  
 Thy son, to whom our house looked up, the stay  
 Of all our palace he, my daughter's son,  
 The awe of the whole city. None would dare  
 Insult the old man when thy fearful face  
 He saw, well knowing he would pay the penalty.  
 Unhonoured now, I am driven from out mine home;  
 Cadmus the great, who all the race of Thebes  
 Sowed in the earth, and reaped that harvest fair.  
 O best beloved of men, thou art now no more,  
 Yet still art dearest of my children thou!  
 No more, this grey beard fondling with thine hand,  
 Wilt call me thine own grandsire, thou sweet child,  
 And fold me round and say, "Who doth not honour  
 thee?

Old man, who troubles or afflicts thine heart?  
 Tell me, that I may 'venge thy wrong, my father!"  
 Now wretchedst of men am I. Thou pitiable—  
 More pitiable thy mother—sad thy kin.  
 O if there be who scorneth the great gods,  
 Gaze on this death, and know that there are gods.

*Chorus.* Cadmus, I grieve for thee. Thy daughter's son  
 Hath his just doom—just, but most piteous.

*Agave.* Father, thou seest how all is changed with me:  
*I am no more the Maenad dancing blithe,  
 I am but the feeble, fond, and desolate mother.  
 I know, I see—ah, knowledge best unknown!  
 Sight best unseen!—I see, I know my son,  
 Mine only son!—alas! no more my son.  
 O beauteous limbs, that in my womb I bare!  
 O head, that on my lap wast wont to sleep!  
 O lips, that from my bosom's swelling fount  
 Drained the delicious and soft-oozing milk!  
 O hands, whose first use was to fondle me!  
 O feet, that were so light to run to me!  
 O gracious form, that men wondering beheld!  
 O haughty brow, before which Thebes bowed down!*

*O majesty ! O strength ! by mine own hands—  
 By mine own murderous, sacrilegious hands—  
 Torn, rent asunder, scattered, cast abroad !  
 O thou hard god ! was there no other way  
 To visit us ? Oh ! if the son must die,  
 Must it be by the hand of his own mother ?  
 If the impious mother must atone her sin,  
 Must it be but by murdering her own son ?*

*Dionysus.* Now hear ye all, Thebes' founders, what is woven  
 By the dread shuttle of the unerring Fates.  
 Thou, Cadmus, father of this earth-born race,  
 A dragon shalt become ; thy wife shalt take  
 A brutish form, and sink into a serpent,  
 Harmonia, Ares' daughter, whom thou wedd'st,  
 Though mortal, as Jove's oracle declares.  
 Thou in a car by heifers drawn shalt ride,  
 And with thy wife, at the Barbarians' head :  
 And many cities with their countless host  
 Shall they destroy, but when they dare destroy  
 The shrine of Loxias, back shall they return  
 In shameful flight ; but Ares guards Harmonia  
 And thee, and bears you to the Isles of the Blest.

This say I, of no mortal father born,  
 Dionysus, son of Jove. Had ye but known  
 To have been pious when ye might, Jove's son  
 Had been your friend ; ye had been happy still.

*Agave.* Dionysus, we implore thee ! We have sinned !

*Dionysus.* Too late ye say so ; when ye should, ye would not.

*Agave.* That know we now ; but thou'rt extreme in  
 vengeance.

*Dionysus.* Was I not outraged, being a god, by you ?

*Agave.* The gods should not be like to men in wrath.

*Dionysus.* This Jove, my father, long hath granted me.

*Agave.* Alas, old man ! Our exile is decreed.

*Dionysus.* Why then delay ye the inevitable ?

*Cadmus.* O child, to what a depth of woe we have fallen !

Most wretched thou, and all thy kin beloved !

I too to the Barbarians must depart,

An aged denizen. For there's a prophecy,

'Gainst Hellas a Barbaric mingled host

Harmonia leads, my wife, daughter of Ares.

A dragon I, with dragon nature fierce,

Shall lead the stranger spearmen 'gainst the altars  
And tombs of Hellas, nor shall cease my woes—  
Sad wretch !—not even when I have ferried o'er  
Dark Acheron, shall I repose in peace.

*Agave.* Father ! to exile go I without thee ?

*Cadmus.* Why dost thou clasp me in thine arms, sad child,  
A drone among the bees, a swan worn out ?

*Agave.* Where shall I go, an exile from my country ? .

*Cadmus.* I know not, child ; thy sire is a feeble aid.

*Agave.* Farewell, mine home ! Farewell, my native Thebes !  
My bridal chamber ! Banished, I go forth.

*Cadmus.* To the house of Aristæus go, my child.

*Agave.* I wait for thee, my father !

*Cadmus.* I for thee !

And for thy sisters.

*Agave.* Fearfully, fearfully, this deep disgrace,  
Hath Dionysus brought upon our race.

*Dionysus.* Fearful on me the wrong that ye had done ;  
Unhonoured was my name in Thebes alone.

*Agave.* Father, farewell !

*Cadmus.* Farewell, my wretched daughter !

*Agave.* So lead me forth—my sisters now to meet,  
Sad fallen exiles.

Let me, let me go  
Where cursed Cithæron ne'er may see me more,  
Nor I the cursed Cithæron see again.  
Where there's no memory of the thyrsus dance.  
The Bacchic orgies be the care of others.

# ALCESTIS

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

APOLLO.  
ORCUS.  
ALCESTIS.  
ADMETUS.  
EUMELUS.

HERCULES.  
PHERES.  
ATTENDANTS.  
CHORUS OF PHERÆANS.

APOLLO.

THY royal house, Admetus, yet again  
I visit, where a slave among thy slaves  
Thy table, though a god, I deigned to praise ;  
To this compelled by Jove, who slew my son,  
The healing sage, launching against his breast  
The flaming thunder ; hence enraged I killed  
The Cyclops, that prepared his fiery bolts.  
For this a penal task my vengeful sire  
Assigned me, to a mortal doomed a slave  
Perforce ; I hither came, and fed his herds,  
Who friendly entertained me, guarding then,  
And to this day, his hospitable house.  
Holy the house, and holy is its lord,  
The son of Pheres ; him from death I saved  
The Fates beguiling ; for those ancient powers  
Assented that Admetus should escape  
Death then approaching, would some other go,  
Exchanged for him, to the dark realms beneath.  
His friends, his father, e'en the aged dame  
That gave him birth, were asked in vain ; not one  
Was found, his wife except ; for him she willed  
To die, and view no more th' ethereal light.  
She in the house, supported in their arms,  
Now sighs out her last breath : for she must die.  
And this the fate-appointed day : for this,  
Dear as it is, I leave the friendly mansion,  
Lest there pollution find me. But I see  
Orcus advancing near, priest of the dead ;  
He to the house of Pluto will conduct her ;  
Observant of the stated time he comes,  
True to the day when she perforce must die.

## ORCUS, APOLLO.

*Orcus.* Why art thou here? Why dost thou make this house  
Thy haunt, Apollo? Thou dost wrong, again,  
Th' infernal realms defrauding of their honours,  
Torn from them, or delayed. Sufficed it not  
T' have snatched Admetus from his doom, the Fates  
With fraudulent arts deluding? Now again,  
Armed with thy bow, why dost thou guard his wife,  
Daughter of Pelias, bound by solemn vow,  
Saving her husband's life, to die for him?

*Apollo.* Fear not; thy right I reverence and just claim.

*Orcus.* What means thy bow, if thou revere the right?

*Apollo.* It ever is my wont to bear these arms.

*Orcus.* Ay, and unjustly to defend this house.

*Apollo.* I mourn th' afflictions of the man I love.

*Orcus.* Wouldst thou defraud me of this second dead?

*Apollo.* The first by violence I took not from thee.

*Orcus.* How on the earth then walks he now alive?

*Apollo.* Ransomed by her, for whom thou now art come.

*Orcus.* And I will lead her to the realms below.

*Apollo.* Take her: I know not if I might persuade thee.

*Orcus.* Him, whom I ought, to seize; for that prepared.

*Apollo.* No: but t' involve in death ripe, lingering age.

*Orcus.* Full well I understand thy speech and zeal.

*Apollo.* May then Alcestis to that age be spared?

*Orcus.* No: honour, be assured, delights e'en me.

*Apollo.* Thou canst but take a single life, no more.

*Orcus.* Greater my glory when the youthful die.

*Apollo.* More sumptuous obsequies await her age.

*Orcus.* This were a law in favour of the rich.

*Apollo.* What secret meaning hath thy wisdom here?

*Orcus.* They with their wealth would purchase to die old.

*Apollo.* Wilt thou not then indulge me with this grace?

*Orcus.* Not I indeed: go to: thou knowest my manners.

*Apollo.* Hostile to mortals, hateful to the gods.

*Orcus.* Thou canst not have all that thou shouldst not have.

*Apollo.* Yet, ruthless as thou art, soon wilt thou cease

This contest; such a man to Pheres' house

Comes, to the frozen continent of Thrace

Sent by Eurystheus for the savage steeds

Yoked to the tyrant's car. He, in this house

A welcome guest t' Admetus, will by force  
Take his wife from thee ; and no thanks from me  
Will be thy due ; yet what I now entreat  
Then thou wilt yield, and I shall hate thee still.

*Orcus.* Say what thou wilt, nothing the more for that  
Shalt thou from me obtain : this woman goes,  
Be sure of that, to Pluto's dark domain.

I go, and with this sword assert my claim,  
For sacred to th' infernal gods that head,  
Whose hair is hallowed, by this charmed blade.

CHORUS.

*1st Semichor.* Before this royal mansion all is still :  
What may this melancholy silence mean ?

*2nd Semichor.* And not a friend is nigh, from whom to learn  
Whether we ought to wail the queen now dead,  
Or lives she yet, yet sees the light of heaven,  
For conjugal affection justly deemed  
By me, by all, the noblest of her sex.

*1st Semichor.* Hear you a cry, hear you a clash of hands  
Within, or lamentations for the dead ?

*2nd Semichor.* Not e'en a servant holds his station here  
Before the gates. O, 'midst this awful gloom  
Appear, bright Pæan, and dispel the storm !

*1st Semichor.* If she were dead, they would not be thus silent ;  
Nor could the body vanish from the house.

*2nd Semichor.* Whence is thy confidence ? My fears o'er-  
come me.

*1st Semichor.* A wife so honoured would Admetus bear  
Without due pomp in silence to her tomb ?

*2nd Semichor.* Nor vase of fountain water do I see  
Before the doors, as custom claims, to bathe  
The corse ; and none hath on the portal placed  
His locks, in solemn mourning for the dead  
Usually shorn ; nor does the younger train  
Of females raise their sorrowing voices high.

*1st Semichor.* Yet this the fatal day, when she must leave  
The light of heaven.

*2nd Semichor.* Why dost thou mention this ?

O, thou hast touched my heart, hast touched my soul

*1st Semichor.* When on the good afflictions fall, to grieve  
Becomes the man that hath been prized as honest.

*Strophe.*

In vain, our pious vows are vain :  
 Make we the flying sail our care;  
 The light bark bounding o'er the main,  
 To what new realm shall we repair?  
 To Lycia's hallowed strand?  
 Or where in solitary state,  
 'Midst thirsty deserts wild and wide  
 That close him round on ev'ry side,  
 Prophetic Ammon holds his awful seat?  
 What charm, what potent hand  
 Shall save her from the realms beneath?  
 He comes, the ruthless tyrant Death :  
 I have no priest, no altar more,  
 Whose aid I may implore.

*Antistrophe.*

O that the son of Phœbus now  
 Lived to behold th' ethereal light !  
 Then might she leave the seats below,  
 Where Pluto reigns in cheerless night  
 • The Sage's potent art,  
 Till thund'ring Jove's avenging power  
 Hurl'd his red thunders at his breast,  
 Could from the yawning gulf releast  
 To the sweet light of life the dead restore.  
 Who now shall aid impart?  
 To ev'ry god at ev'ry shrine  
 The king hath paid the rites divine :  
 But vain his vows, his pious care ;  
 And ours is dark despair.

## CHORUS, FEMALE ATTENDANT.

*Chorus.* But of the female train one from the house  
 Comes bathed in tears : what tidings shall I hear?  
 To weep, if aught of ill befalls thy lords,  
 Becomes thee : I would know if yet she lives,  
 Or sinks beneath the ruthless power of death.

*Attend.* As living I may speak of her, and dead.

*Chorus.* Living and dead at once, how may that be?

*Attend.* E'en now she sinks in death, and breathes her last.



*Chorus.* Unhappy king, of what a wife bereft!

*Attend.* Nor knows our lord his suffering, ere it comes.

*Chorus.* Is there no hope then yet to save her life?

*Attend.* Th' inevitable day of fate is come.

*Chorus.* Have you prepared what the sad case requires?

*Attend.* Each honour that may grace her obsequies.

*Chorus.* Illustrious in her death, the best of wives :

• The sun in his wide course sees not her equal.

*Attend.* The best of wives indeed ; who will gainsay it ?

What could the brightest pattern of her sex

Do more ? What greater proof give of the honour

She bears her husband, than a ready will

To die for him ! This all the city knows.

How in the house she hath demeaned herself

Will claim thy admiration. When she knew

The destined day was come, in fountain water

She bathed her lily-tinctured limbs, then took

From her rich chests of odorous cedar formed

A splendid robe, and her most radiant dress ;

Thus gorgeously arrayed she stood before

The hallowed flames, and thus addressed her prayer :

“ O queen, I go to the infernal shades,

Yet, ere I go, with reverence let me breathe

My last request—Protect my orphan children,

Make my son happy with the wife he loves,

And wed my daughter to a noble husband :

Nor let them, like their mother, to the tomb

Untimely sink, but in their native land

Be blest through lengthened life to honoured age.”

Then to each altar in the royal house

She went, and crowned it, and addressed her vows,

Plucking the myrtle bough : nor tear, nor sigh

Came from her, neither did th' approaching ill

Change the fresh beauties of her vermeil cheek.

Her chamber then she visits, and her bed ;

There are tears flowed, and thus she spoke : “ O bed,

To which my wedded lord, for whom I die,

Led me a virgin bride, farewell ! To thee

No blame do I impute, for me alone

Hast thou destroyed. Disdaining to betray

Thee, and my lord, I die. To thee shall come

Some other woman, not more chaste, perchance

More happy." As she lay, she kissed the couch,  
And bathed it with a flood of tears : that passed,  
She left her chamber, then returned, and oft  
She left it, oft returned, and on the couch  
Fondly, each time she entered, cast herself.  
Her children, as they hung upon her robes  
Weeping, she raised, and clasped them to her breast  
Each after each, as now about to die.  
Each servant through the house burst into tears  
In pity of their mistress ; she to each  
Stretched her right hand ; nor was there one so mean  
To whom she spoke not, and admitted him  
To speak to her again. Within the house  
These are our griefs. Admetus must have died,  
Have perished ; but escaping is immersed  
In sorrows, which his heart shall ne'er forget.

*Chorus.* Well may the groan burst from him, thus to lose  
A wife with every excellence adorned.

*Attend.* He weeps indeed, and in his arm supports  
His much-loved wife, entreats her not to leave him,  
Asking impossibilities. She wastes  
And fades with her disease ; her languid limbs  
Supporting on his hand, yet while some breath  
Of life remains she wishes to behold  
The radiance of the sun, 'tis her last view,  
As never more to see his golden orb.  
I go to tell them thou art here : not all  
Bear to their lords that firm unshaken faith  
T' attend them in their ills ; but thou of old  
Hast to this house approved thyself a friend.

*Chorus.* Supreme of gods, is there no remedy  
To these afflictions, from the storms of fate  
No refuge to our lords ? Some means of safety  
Hast thou assigned ? Or must these locks be shorn,  
And sorrow robe me in her sable weeds ?

*Attend.* Too plain, my friends, too plain : yet to the gods  
Breathe we our vows, for great their power to save.  
O royal Pæan, for Admetus' ills  
Find some relief ; assist him, O assist him !  
As thou before didst save him, save him now  
From death ; repress the tyrant's murd'rous haste !

*Chorus.* Alas, alas ! Woe, woe is me ! Thou son

Of Pheres, wilt thou bear to live, deprived  
 Of such a wife? Will not despair unsheath  
 The self-destroying sword? Will it not find  
 Some means of violent death? This day thy wife—  
 Dear should I say? nay, dearest to thy soul—  
 Shalt thou see dead. But she comes forth, and with  
 her

Her husband. Groan, thou land of Pheres, raise  
 The cry of mourning; for the best of women  
 Wastes with disease, and drooping to the earth  
 Sinks to th' infernal Pluto's dreary realms.  
 Never will I pronounce the nuptial state  
 To pleasure more allied than grief: of old  
 This often have I noted, chiefly now  
 Viewing my king's affliction, who, bereft  
 Of this sweet excellence, is doomed to pass  
 A solitary life estranged from joy.

ALCESTIS, ADMETUS, EUMELUS, CHORUS.

*Alcestis.* Thou sun, and thou fair light of day, ye clouds  
 That in quick eddies whirl along the sky!

*Admetus.* Sees thee and me most wretched, yet in nought  
 Offending 'gainst the gods that thou shouldst die.

*Alcestis.* O earth, ye tow'ring roofs, thou bridal bed  
 Raised in Iolcos, my paternal seat!

*Admetus.* O thou poor sufferer, raise thee, leave me not;  
 Entreat the powerful gods to pity thee.

*Alcestis.* I see the two-oared boat, the Stygian barge;  
 And he, that wafts the dead, grasps in his hand  
 His pole, and calls me, "Why dost thou delay?  
 Haste thee; thou lingerest; all is ready here.  
 Charon impatient speeds me to begone."

*Admetus.* A melancholy voyage this to me.  
 O thou unhappy, what a fate is ours!

*Alcestis.* He drags me, some one drags me to the gates  
 That close upon the dead; dost thou not see him,  
 How stern he frowns beneath his gloomy brows,  
 Th' impetuous Pluto? What wouldst thou with me?  
 Off, let me go! Ah, what a dreary path,  
 Wretched, most wretched, must I downwards tread!

*Admetus.* To thy friends mournful, most to me, and these  
 Thy children, who with me this sorrow share.

*Alcestis.* No longer hold me up, hold me no longer ;  
Here lay me down : I have not strength to stand :  
Death is hard by, dark night creeps o'er my eyes.  
My children, O my children, now no more,  
Your mother is no more : farewell ! May you  
More happy see the golden light of heaven !

*Admetus.* Ah, what a mournful word is this ! To me  
Than any death more painful. By the gods,  
Forsake me not. Shouldst thou be taken from me,  
I were no more ; in thee I live ; thy love,  
Thy sweet society my soul reveres.

*Alcestis.* Thou seest, Admetus, what to me the Fates  
Assign ; yet, ere I die, I wish to tell thee  
What lies most near my heart. I honoured thee,  
And in exchange for thine my forfeit life  
Devoted ; now I die for thee, though free  
Not to have died, but from Thessalia's chiefs  
Preferring whom I pleased in royal state  
To have lived happy here : I had no will  
To live bereft of thee with these poor orphans ;  
I die without reluctance, though the gifts  
Of youth are mine to make life grateful to me.  
Yet he that gave thee birth, and she that bore thee,  
Deserted thee, though well it had beseeemed them  
With honour to have died for thee, t' have saved  
Their son with honour, glorious in their death.  
They had no child but thee, they had no hope  
Of other offspring shouldst thou die ; and I  
Might thus have lived, thou mightst have lived, till age  
Crept slowly on, nor wouldst thou heave the sigh  
Thus of thy wife deprived, nor train alone  
Thy orphan children. But some god appointed  
It should be thus : thus be it. Thou to me  
Requite this kindness ; never shall I ask  
An equal retribution, nothing bears  
A value high as life : yet my request  
Is just, thou wilt confess it ; for thy love  
To these our children equals mine, thy soul  
If wisdom tempers. In their mother's house  
Let them be lords : wed not again, to set  
A stepdame o'er my children, some base woman  
That wants my virtues ; she through jealousy

Will work against their lives, because to thee  
 I bore them : do not this, I beg thee do not ;  
 For to the offspring of a former bed  
 A stepdame comes sharp as a serpent's tooth.  
 My son, that holds endearing converse with thee,  
 Hath in his father a secure protection.  
 But who, my daughter, shall with honour guide  
 Thy virgin years? What woman shalt thou find,  
 New-wedded to thy father, whose vile arts  
 Will not with slanderous falsehoods taint thy name,  
 And blast thy nuptials in youth's freshest bloom  
 For never shall thy mother see thee led  
 A bride, nor at thy throes speak comfort to thee,  
 Then present when a mother's tenderness  
 Is most alive : for I must die ; the ill  
 Waits not a day, but quickly shall I be  
 Numbered amongst the dead. Farewell, be happy  
 And thou, my husband, mayst with honour boast  
 Thou hast been wedded to a virtuous wife ;  
 And you, my children, glory in your mother.

*Chorus.* Fear not : I boldly pledge my faith that this  
 He will perform, if reason holds her seat.

*Admetus.* This shall be done, let not such fears disturb thee,  
 It shall be done ; for living thou wast mine,  
 And dead thou only shalt be called my wife.  
 Never in thy dear place Thessalian bride  
 Shall call me husband : no, nor other woman,  
 Though from a line of ancient kings she draws  
 Her noble blood, and boasts each peerless grace  
 Of native beauty. I am blest with children,  
 Nor wish I more ; in these I pray the gods  
 I may have joy, since all my joy in thee  
 Is lost. This mourning not one single year,  
 But to my life's last period, shall be borne.  
 How hateful are my parents ! for their words  
 Alone were friendly, not their deeds ; whilst thou,  
 Paying the dearest forfeit for my life,  
 Hast saved me. Shall I ever cease to mourn,  
 Deprived of such a wife? Hence I renounce  
 The feast, the cheerful guest, the flow'ry wreath  
 And song that used to echo through my house.  
 For never will I touch the lyre again,

Nor to the Libyan flute's sweet measures raise  
My voice : with thee all my delights are dead.  
Thy beauteous figure, by the artist's hand  
Skilfully wrought, shall in my bed be laid ;  
By that reclining, I will clasp it to me,  
And call it by thy name, and think I hold  
My dear wife in my arms, and have her yet,  
Though now no more I have her : cold delight  
I ween ; yet thus th' affliction of my soul  
Shall I relieve, and visiting my dreams  
Shalt thou delight me ; for to see a friend  
Is grateful to the soul, come when he will,  
Though an unreal vision of the night.  
Had I the voice of Orpheus, and his skill  
Of power to soothe with my melodious strains  
The daughter of bright Ceres, or her husband,  
That from their realms I might receive thee back,  
I would go down ; nor should th' infernal dog,  
Nor the stern Charon, sitting at his oar  
To waft the dead, restrain me, till thy life  
I had restored to the fair light of day.  
But there await me till I die ; prepare  
A mansion for me, as again with me  
To dwell ; for in thy tomb will I be laid  
In the same cedar, by thy side composed ;  
For ev'n in death I will not be disjoined  
From thee, who hast alone been faithful to me.

*Chorus.* For her dear sake thy sorrows will I share  
As friend with friend ; and she is worthy of it.

*Alcestis.* You hear, my children, what your father's words  
Have promised, not to wed another woman  
To your discomfort, nor dishonour me.

*Admetus.* I now repeat it ; firm shall be my faith.

*Alcestis.* On this, receive thy children from my hands.

*Admetus.* A much-loved gift, and from a much-loved hand

*Alcestis.* Be now, instead of me, a mother to them.

*Admetus.* If they lose thee, it must indeed be so.

*Alcestis.* When I should live, I sink among the dead.

*Admetus.* Ah me, what shall I do bereft of thee !

*Alcestis.* Time will abate thy grief, the dead is nothing.

*Admetus.* O lead me, by the gods, lead me down with thee.

*Alcestis.* Enough, it is enough that I die for thee.

*Admetus.* O fate, of what a wife dost thou deprive me !

*Alcestis.* A heavy weight hangs on my darkened eye.

*Admetus.* If thou forsake me, I am lost indeed.

*Alcestis.* As one that is no more I now am nothing.

*Admetus.* Ah, raise thy face : do not forsake thy children.

*Alcestis.* It must be so perforce : farewell, my children !

*Admetus.* Look on them, but a look !

*Alcestis.* I am no more.

*Admetus.* How dost thou ? Wilt thou leave us then ?

*Alcestis.* Farewell !

*Admetus.* And what a wretch, what a lost wretch am I !

*Chorus.* She's gone ; thy wife, Admetus, is no more.

*Eumelus.* O my unhappy fate !

My mother sinks to the dark realms of night,

Nor longer views this golden light ;

But to the ills of life exposed

Leaves my poor orphan state.

Her eyes, my father, see, her eyes are closed,

And her hand nerveless falls.

Yet hear me, O my mother, hear my cries,

It is thy son that calls,

Who prostrate on the earth breathes on thy lips his sighs.

*Admetus.* On one that hears not, sees not : I and you

Must bend beneath affliction's heaviest load.

*Eumelus.* Ah, she hath left my youth :

My mother, my dear mother, is no more,

Left me my sufferings to deplore ;

Who shall my sorrows soothe ?

'Thou too, my sister, thy full share shalt know

Of grief, thy heart to rend.

Vain, O my father, vain thy nuptial vows,

Brought to this speedy end ;

For, when my mother died, in ruin sunk thy house.

*Chorus.* Admetus, thou perforce must bear these ills :

Thou'rt not the first, nor shalt thou be the last

Of mortal men, to lose a virtuous wife :

For know, death is a debt we all must pay.

*Admetus.* I know it well ; not unawares this ill

Falls on me ; I foresaw, and mourned it long.

But I will bear the body hence ; attend :

And, whilst you wait, raise with alternate voice

The pæan to the ruthless god that rules

Below : and through my realms of Thessaly  
I give command that all in solemn grief  
For this dear woman shear their locks, and wear  
The sable garb of mourning ; from your steeds,  
Whether in pairs they whirl the car, or bear  
Single the rider's rein, their waving manes  
Cut close ; nor through the city be the sound  
Of flute or lyre for twelve revolving moons.  
Never shall I entomb one dearer to me,  
Or one more kind : these honours from my hands  
She merits, for she only died for me.

*Strophe 1.*

Immortal bliss be thine,  
Daughter of Pelias in the realms below,  
Immortal pleasures round thee flow,  
Though never there the sun's bright beams shall shine.  
Be the black-browed Pluto told,  
And the Stygian boatman old,  
Whose rude hands grasp the oar, the rudder guide;  
The dead conveying o'er the tide,  
Let him be told, so rich a freight before  
His light skiff never bore ;  
Tell him that o'er the joyless lakes  
The noblest of her sex her dreary passage takes.

*Strophe 2.*

Thy praise the bards shall tell,  
When to their hymning voice the echo rings,  
Or when they sweep the solemn strings,  
And wake to rapture the seven-chorded shell,  
Or in Sparta's jocund bowers,  
Circling when the vernal hours  
Bring the Carnean feast, whilst through the night  
Full-orbed the high moon rolls her light ;  
Or where rich Athens proudly elevate  
Shows her magnificent state :  
Their voice thy glorious death shall raise,  
And swell th' enraptured strain to celebrate thy  
praise.



*Antistrophe 1.*

O that I had the power,  
 Could I but bring thee from the shades of night  
 Again to view this golden light,  
 To leave that boat, to leave that dreary shore,  
 Where Cocytus deep and wide  
 Rolls along his sullen tide !  
 For thou, O best of women, thou alone  
 For thy lord's life daredst give thy own.  
 Light lie the earth upon that gentle breast,  
 And be thou ever blest !  
 But should he choose to wed again,  
 Mine and thy children's hearts would hold him in disdain.

*Antistrophe 2.*

When, to avert his doom,  
 His mother in the earth refused to lie ;  
 Nor would his ancient father die  
 To save his son from an untimely tomb ;  
 Though the hand of time had spread  
 Hoar hairs o'er each aged head ;  
 In youth's fresh bloom, in beauty's radiant glow,  
 The darksome way thou daredst to go,  
 And for thy youthful lord's to give thy life.  
 Be mine so true a wife ;  
 Though rare the lot : then should I prove  
 Th' indissoluble bond of faithfulness and love.

## HERCULES, CHORUS.

*Hercules.* Ye strangers, citizens of Pheræ, say  
 If I shall find Admetus in the house.

*Chorus.* There is the son of Pheres, Hercules.  
 But what occasion, tell us, brought thee hither  
 To Thessaly ; to Pheræ why this visit ?

*Hercules.* A toil imposed by the Tiryinthian king.

*Chorus.* And whither roving ? On what journey bound ?

*Hercules.* For the four steeds that whirl the Thracian's car.

*Chorus.* How to be won ; art thou a stranger there ?

*Hercules.* A stranger, never on Bistonian ground.

*Chorus.* These horses are not won without strong contest.

*Hercules.* The toil, whate'er it be, I could not shun.

*Chorus.* He must be slain, or death awaits thee there.

*Hercules.* Not the first contest this I have essayed.

*Chorus.* Shouldst thou o'ercome their lord, what is the prize?

*Hercules.* His coursers to Eurystheus I shall lead.

*Chorus.* No slight task in their mouths to place the curb.

*Hercules.* I shall, though from their nostrils they breathe fire.

*Chorus.* With their fierce jaws they rend the flesh of men.

*Hercules.* So feeds the mountain savage, not the horse.

*Chorus.* Their mangers shalt thou see all stained with blood.

*Hercules.* From whom does he that bred them draw his race?

*Chorus.* From Mars this king of golden shielded Thrace.

*Hercules.* How is this toil assigned me by my fate,  
In enterprise so hazardous and high  
Engaged, that always with the sons of Mars  
I must join battle? With Lycaon first,  
With Cygnus next; now with these furious steeds  
And their proud lord another contest waits me:  
But never shall Alcmena's son be seen  
To tremble at the fierceness of a foe.

*Chorus.* But, see, the sceptred ruler of this land,  
Admetus, from his house advances to thee.

ADMETUS, HERCULES, CHORUS.

*Admetus.* Hail, son of Jove, of Perseus' noble blood.

*Hercules.* Hail thou, Admetus, king of Thessaly.

*Admetus.* I am no stranger to thy friendly wishes.

*Hercules.* Why are thy locks in sign of mourning shorn?

*Admetus.* 'Tis for one dead, whom I must this day bury.

*Hercules.* The god avert thy mourning for a child!

*Admetus.* My children, what I had, live in my house.

*Hercules.* Thy aged father, haply he is gone.

*Admetus.* My father lives, and she that bore me lives.

*Hercules.* Lies then thy wife Alcestis 'mongst the dead?

*Admetus.* Of her I have in double wise to speak.

*Hercules.* As of the living speakst thou, or the dead?

*Admetus.* She is, and is no more: this grief afflicts me.

*Hercules.* This gives no information, dark thy words.

*Admetus.* Knowst thou not then the destiny assigned her?

*Hercules.* I know that she submits to die for thee.

*Admetus.* To this assenting is she not no more?

*Hercules.* Lament her not too soon; await the time.

*Admetus.* She's dead; one soon to die is now no more.

*Hercules.* It differs wide to be, or not to be.

*Admetus.* Such 'are thy sentiments, far other mine.

*Hercules.* But wherefore are thy tears? What friend is dead?

*Admetus.* A woman; of a woman made I mention.

*Hercules.* Of foreign birth, or one allied to thee.

*Admetus.* Of foreign birth, but to my house most dear.

*Hercules.* How in thy house then did she chance to die?

*Admetus.* Her father dead, she came an orphan hither.

*Hercules.* Would I had found thee with no grief oppressed.

*Admetus.* With what intent dost thou express thee thus?

*Hercules.* To seek some other hospitable hearth.

*Admetus.* Not so, O king; come not so great an ill.

*Hercules.* To those that mourn a guest is troublesome.

*Admetus.* Dead are the dead: but enter thou my house.

*Hercules.* Shame that with those who weep a guest should  
feast.

*Admetus.* We have apartments separate, to receive thee.

*Hercules.* Permit me to depart, much will I thank thee.

*Admetus.* It must not be; no, to another house

Thou must not turn aside. Go thou before;  
Ope those apartments of the house which bear  
A different aspect; give command to those  
Whose charge it is to spread the plenteous table,  
And bar the doors between: the voice of woe  
Unseemly heard afflicts the feasting guest.

*Chorus.* What wouldst thou do, Admetus? Such a grief

Now lying heavy on thee, canst thou bear  
T' admit a guest? Doth this bespeak thee wise?

*Admetus.* If from my house or city I should drive

A coming guest, wouldst thou commend me more?  
Thou wouldst not: my affliction would not thus  
Be less, but more unhospitable I;  
And to my former ills this further ill  
Be added, I should hear my mansion called  
The stranger-hating house. Besides, to me  
His hospitable doors are always open,  
Whene'er I tread the thirsty soil of Argos.

*Chorus.* Why didst thou then conceal thy present grief,  
A stranger friend arriving, as thou sayst?

*Admetus.* My gate he would not enter, had he known  
 Of my affliction aught : yet acting thus  
 Some may perchance deem me unwise, nor hold me  
 Worthy of praise ; yet never shall my house  
 Know to dishonour or reject a guest.

CHORUS.

*Strophe 1.*

Yes, liberal house, with princely state  
 To many a stranger, many a guest  
 Oft hast thou oped thy friendly gate,  
 Oft spread the hospitable feast.  
 Beneath thy roof Apollo deigned to dwell,  
 Here strung his silver-sounding shell,  
 And mixing with thy menial train  
 Deigned to be called the shepherd of the plain :  
 And as he drove his flocks along,  
 Whether the winding vale they rove,  
 Or linger in the upland grove,  
 He tuned the pastoral pipe or rural song.

• *Strophe 2.*

Delighted with thy tuneful lay  
 No more the savage thirsts for blood ;  
 Amidst thy flocks in harmless play  
 Wantons the lynx's spotted brood ;  
 Pleased from his lair on Othrys' rugged brow  
 The lion seeks the vale below ;  
 Whilst to thy lyre's melodious sound  
 The dappled hinds in sportive measures bound ;  
 And as the vocal echo rings,  
 Lightly their nimble feet they ply,  
 Leaving their pine-clad forests high,  
 Charmed with the sweet notes of thy gladdening strings,

*Antistrophe 1.*

Hence is thy house, Admetus, graced  
 With all that Plenty's hand bestows,  
 Near the sweat-streaming current placed  
 That from the lake of Boëbia flows.

Far to the west extends the wide domain,  
 Rich-pastured mead and cultured plain ;  
 Its bound, the dark Molossian air,  
 Where the Sun stations his unharnessed car,  
 And stretching to his eastern ray,  
 Where Pelion rising in his pride  
 Frowns o'er th' Ægean's portless tide,  
 Reaches from sea to sea thy ample sway.

*Antistrophe 2.*

Yet wilt thou ope thy gate e'en now,  
 E'en now wilt thou receive this guest :  
 Though from thine eye the warm tear flow,  
 Though sorrow rend thy suffering breast :  
 Sad tribute to thy wife, who knew in death.  
 Lamented lies thy roof beneath,  
 But Nature thus her laws decreed,  
 The generous mind is prompt to generous deed ;  
 For all the power of wisdom lies  
 Fixed in the righteous bosom : hence  
 My soul assumes this confidence,  
 Fair to the virtuous shall Success arise.

ADMETUS, CHORUS.

*Admetus.* Ye citizens of Pheræ, present here,  
 Benevolent to me, my dead adorned  
 With every honour, the attendant train  
 Are bearing to the tomb and funeral pyre.  
 Do you, for ancient usage so requires,  
 Address her as she takes her last sad way.

*Chorus.* Thy father Pheres ! See, his aged foot  
 Advances ; his attendants in their hands  
 Bear gorgeous presents, honours to the dead.

PERES, ADMETUS, CHORUS.

*Pheres.* I come, my son, joint sufferer in thy griefs ;  
 For thou hast lost a good and virtuous wife,  
 None will gainsay it ; but thou must perforce  
 Endure this, though severe. These ornaments  
 Receive, and let her go beneath the earth :  
 These honours are her due, since for thy life  
 She died, my son ; nor would she I should be

Childless, nor suffered me bereft of thee  
To waste in grief my sad remains of life.  
The life of all her sex hath she adorned  
With added lustre by this generous deed.  
O thou, that hast preserved my son, and raised  
Our sinking glories, hail ! E'en in the house  
Of Pluto be thou blest ! Such marriages  
Pronounce I good ; others of little worth.

*Admetus.* Thou comest not to these obsequies by me  
Invited, nor thy presence do I deem  
Friendly. She never in thy ornaments  
Shall be arrayed, nor wants she aught of thine  
To grace her funeral rites. Then was the time  
To show thy social sorrow, when my life  
The Fates demanded : thou couldst stand aloof,  
Old as thou art, and give a younger up  
To die ; and wouldst thou now bewail her death ?  
Art thou my father ? No ; nor she, who says  
She brought me forth, my mother, though so called ;  
But the base offspring of some slave thy wife  
Stole me, and put me to her breast. Thy deeds  
Show what thou art by plain and evident proof :  
• And never can I deem myself thy son,  
Who passest all in mean and abject spirit.  
At such an age, just trembling on the verge  
Of life, that wouldst not—nay, thou daredst not—die  
For thine own son : but you could suffer her,  
Though sprung from foreign blood. With justice then  
Her only as my father must I deem,  
Her only as my mother ; yet this course  
Mightst thou have run with glory, for thy son  
Daring to die ; brief was the space of life  
That could remain to thee. I then had lived  
My destined time ; she too had lived, nor thus  
Of her forsaken should I wail my loss.  
Yet all that makes man happy hadst thou proved,  
Blest through thy life : in royalty thy youth  
Grew up ; I was thy son t' inherit from thee  
Thy treasures, that not childless hadst thou died,  
Leaving thy desolated house a prey  
To plundering strangers. Neither canst thou say  
Thou gavest me up to death as one that held

Thy age in rude contempt : I honoured thee  
With holy reverence, requited thus  
By thee and her that bore me. Other sons  
Wilt thou not therefore speed thee to beget,  
To cherish thy old age, to grace thee dead  
With sumptuous vest, and lay thee in the tomb?  
That office never shall my hand perform,  
For, far as in thee lay, I died ; if yet  
I view this light, fortune presenting me  
Other deliverer, his son I am,  
With pious fondness to support his age.  
Unmeaning is the old man's wish to die,  
Of age complaining and life's lengthened course ;  
For, at th' advance of death, none has the will  
To die : old age is no more grievous to them.

*Chorus.* Forbear ; enough the present weight of woe.  
My son, exasperate not a father's mind.

*Pheres.* Me as some worthless Lydian dost thou rate,  
My son, or Phrygian slave bought with thy gold?  
Dost thou not know I am Thessalian born,  
Of a Thessalian father, truly free?  
Opprobrious are thy words, reviling me  
With youthful insolence, not quitted so.  
I gave thee birth, thence lord of my fair house ;  
I gave thee nurture, that indeed I owed thee,  
But not to die for thee : such law from nature  
Received I not, that fathers for their sons  
Should die, nor does Greece know it. For thyself,  
Whether misfortune press thee, or thy state  
Be happier, thou wast born : thou hast from me  
Whate'er behoves thee : o'er an ample realm  
Thou now art king, and I shall leave thee more,  
A large extent of lands ; for from my father  
These I received. In what then have I wronged thee?  
Or what deprived thee? Die not thou for me,  
Nor I for thee. Is it to thee a joy  
To view the light of heaven? and dost thou think  
Thy father joys not in it? Long I deem  
The time below? But little is the space  
Of life, yet pleasant. Thou, devoid of shame,  
Hast struggled not to die, and thou dost live  
Passing the bounds of life assigned by fate,

By killing her. My mean and abject spirit  
Thou dost rebuke, O thou most timid wretch,  
Vanquished e'en by a woman, who for thee,  
Her young and beauteous husband, freely died.  
A fine device that thou mightst never die,  
Couldst thou persuade who at the time might be  
Thy wife to die for thee ; yet canst thou load  
Thy friends with vile reproach, if they decline,  
To do it, base and timid as thou art.  
But hold thy peace ; and think, if life be dear  
To thee, it must be dear to all. On us,  
If thou wilt throw reproaches, thou shalt hear  
Enough of thy ill deeds, and nothing false.

*Chorus.* Too much of ill already hath been spoken :  
Forbear, old man, nor thus revile thy son.

*Admetus.* Say what thou wilt, I have declared my thoughts :  
But if it gives thee pain to hear the truth,  
Much it behoved thee not to wrong me thus.

*Pheres.* Had I died for thee, greater were the wrong.

*Admetus.* Is death alike then to the young and old ?

*Pheres.* With one life ought we live, and not with two.

*Admetus.* Mayst thou then live a greater age than Jove !

*Pheres.* And dost thou, nothing injured, curse thy parents ?

*Admetus.* I saw thee fondly coveting long life.

*Pheres.* Her, that died for thee, wilt thou not entomb ?

*Admetus.* These are the tokens of thy abject spirit.

*Pheres.* By us she died not, that thou wilt not say.

*Admetus.* Ah, mayst thou some time come to want my aid !

*Pheres.* Wed many wives, that more may die for thee.

*Admetus.* On thee be that reproach, thou wouldst not die.

*Pheres.* Sweet is this light of heaven, sweet is this light.

*Admetus.* Base is thy thought, unworthy of a man.

*Pheres.* Would it not joy thee to entomb my age ?

*Admetus.* Die when thou wilt, inglorious wilt thou die.

*Pheres.* An ill report will not affect me dead.

*Admetus.* Alas, alas, how shameless is old age !

*Pheres.* She was not shameless, but thou foundst her mad.

*Admetus.* Begone, and suffer me t' entomb the dead.

*Pheres.* I go ; thou shalt entomb her, as thyself

Her murderer. Look for vengeance from her friends.  
Acastus is no man, if his hands fail  
Dearly t' avenge on thee his sister's blood.



*Admetus.* Why get thee gone, thou and thy worthy wife ;  
Grow old together, as you well deserve,  
Childless, your son yet living ; never more  
Meet me beneath this roof. Go ! Were it decent  
To interdict thee by the herald's voice,  
I would forbid thee ever set thy foot  
Within this mansion of thy ancestors.

But let us go, since we must bear our ill,  
And place her body on the funeral pyre.

*Chorus.* O thou unhappy, nobly daring woman,  
Most generous, brightest excellence, farewell !  
Courteous my Hermes and th' infernal king  
Receive thee : in those realms if aught of grace  
Awaits the virtuous, be those honours thine,  
And be thy seat nigh Pluto's royal bride.

*Attend.* To many a guest ere now, from various realms  
Arriving, in this mansion have I spread  
The hospitable feast ; but at this hearth  
A viler than this stranger never shared  
The bounty of Admetus : though he saw  
My lord oppressed with grief, it checked him not,  
He boldly entered ; nor with sober cheer  
Took the refreshment offered, though he knew  
Th' affliction of the house. If what he would  
We brought not on the instant, he enforced  
His harsh commands ; and, grasping in his hands  
A goblet wreathed with ivy, filled it high  
With the grape's purple juice, and quaffed it off  
Untempered, till the glowing wine inflamed him ;  
Then, binding round his head a myrtle wreath,  
Howls dismal discord ; two displeasing strains  
We heard, his harsh notes, who in nought revered  
Th' afflictions of Admetus, and the voice  
Of sorrow through the family that wept  
Our mistress ; yet our tearful eyes we showed not,  
Admetus so commanded, to the guest.  
My office bids me wait, and in the house  
Receive this stranger, some designing knave,  
Or ruffian robber : she meantime is borne  
Out of the house, nor did I follow her,  
Nor stretched my hand lamenting my lost mistress :  
She was a mother to me, and to all

My fellow-servants ; from a thousand ills  
She saved us, with her gentleness appeasing  
Our lord when angry : justly do I hate  
This stranger then, who came amidst our grief:

HERCULES, ATTENDANT.

*Hercules.* You fellow, why that grave and thoughtful look?

Ill it becomes a servant's countenance  
To frown on strangers, whom he should receive  
With cheerfulness. A good friend of thy lord  
Is present : all the welcome he can get  
From thee, a sullen and contracted brow,  
Mourning a loss that touches not this house.  
Come hither, that thou mayst be wiser, friend ;  
Knowst thou the nature of all mortal things ?  
Not thou, I ween ; how shouldst thou ? Hear from me  
By all of human race death is a debt  
That must be paid, and none of mortal men  
Knows whether till to-morrow life's short space  
Shall be extended : such the dark events  
Of fortune ; never to be learned, nor traced  
By any skill. Instructed thus by me  
Bid pleasure welcome, drink, the life allowed  
From day to day esteem thine own, all else  
Fortune's. To Venus chief address thy vows—  
Of all the heavenly powers she, gentle queen,  
Kindest to man, and sweetest : all besides  
Reckless let pass, and listen to my words,  
If thou seest reason in them, as I think  
Thou dost : then bid excessive grief farewell,  
And drink with us ; master these present ills,  
And bind thy brows with garlands ; well I know  
The circling bowl will waft thy spirits to bliss,  
Now sunk in dark and sullen melancholy.  
Since we are mortal, be our minds intent  
On mortal things ; to all the grave, whose brows  
With cares are furrowed, let me judge for thee,  
Life is no life, but a calamity.

*Attend.* These things we know ; but what becomes us now  
Ill suits with festal revelry and mirth.

*Hercules.* A woman dies, one unrelated ; check  
Thy grief : the lords of this fair mansion live.



My eye shall watch, not without hope to find him  
Drinking th' oblations nigh the tomb. If once  
Seen from my secret stand I rush upon him,  
These arms shall grasp him till his panting sides  
Labour for breath ; and who shall force him from me,  
Till he gives back this woman ? Should I fail  
To seize him there, as coming not to taste  
The spilt blood's thickening foam, I will descend  
To the drear house of Pluto and his queen,  
Which the sun never cheers, and beg her thence,  
Assured that I shall lead her back, and place her  
In my friend's hands, whose hospitable heart  
Received me in his house, nor made excuse,  
Though pierced with such a grief ; this he concealed  
Through generous thought an reverence to his friend.  
Who in Thessalia bears a warmer love  
To strangers ? Who, through all the realms of Greece ?  
It never shall be said this generous man  
Received in me a base and worthless wretch.

## ADMETUS, CHORUS.

*Admetus.* Ah me ! Ah me ! How mournful this approach !  
How hateful to my sight this widowed house !  
Ah, whither shall I go ? where shall I rest ?  
What shall I say ? or what forbear to say ?  
How may I sink beneath this weight of woe ?  
To misery was I born, wretch that I am ;  
I envy now the dead, I long for them,  
Long to repose me in that house. No more  
With pleasure shall I view the sun's fair beams,  
No more with pleasure walk upon this earth :  
So dear an hostage death has rent from me,  
And yielded to th' infernal king his prey.

*Chorus.* Go forward, yet go forward ; to thy house  
Retire.

*Admetus.* Ah me !

*Chorus.* Thy sufferings do indeed  
Demand these groans.

*Admetus.* O miserable me !

*Chorus.* Thy steps are set in sorrow, well I know,  
But all thy sorrow nought avails the dead.

*Admetus.* Wretch that I am !

*Chorus.* To see thy wife no more,  
No more to see her face, is grief indeed.

*Admetus.* O, thou hast touched on that which deepest wounds  
My mind : what greater ill can fall on man  
Than of a faithful wife to be deprived ?  
O that I ne'er had wedded, in the house  
Had ne'er dwelt with her ! The unmarried state  
I envy, and deem those supremely blest  
Who have no children ; in one single life  
To mourn is pain that may be well endured .  
To see our children wasting with disease,  
To see death ravaging our nuptial bed,  
This is not to be borne, when we might pass  
Our lives without a child, without a wife.

*Chorus.* Fate comes, resistless Fate.

*Admetus.* Unhappy me !

*Chorus.* But to thy sorrows wilt thou put no bounds ?

*Admetus.* Woe, woe, woe, woe !

*Chorus.* A ponderous weight indeed  
To bear, yet bear them. Thou art not the first  
That lost a wife : misery, in different forms,  
To different men appearing, seizes all.

*Admetus.* Ye lasting griefs, ye sorrows for our friends  
Beneath the earth ! Ah, why did ye restrain me ?  
I would have cast myself into the tomb,  
The gaping tomb, and lain in death with her,  
The dearest, best of women ; there for one  
Pluto had coupled two most faithful souls,  
Together passing o'er th' infernal lake.

*Chorus.* I had a friend, by birth allied to me,  
Whose son, and such a son as claimed his tears,  
Died in the prime of youth, his only child ;  
Yet with the firmness of a man he bore  
His grief, though childless, and declining age  
Led him with hasty steps to hoary hairs.

*Admetus.* Thou goodly mansion, how shall I endure  
To enter thee, how dwell beneath thy roof,  
My state thus sunk ! Ah me, how changed from that,  
When 'midst the pines of Pelion blazing round,  
And hymeneal hymns, I held my way,  
And led my loved Alcestis by her hand :

The festal train with many a cheerful shout  
Saluted her, now dead, and me, and hailed  
Our union happy, as descended each  
From generous blood and high-born ancestry.  
Now for the nuptial song, the voice of woe—  
For gorgeous robes, this black and mournful garb—  
Attends me to my halls, and to my couch,  
\* Where solitary sorrow waits me now.

*Chorus.* This sorrow came upon thee 'midst a state  
Of happiness, a stranger thou to ills :  
Yet is thy life preserved : thy wife is dead,  
Leaving thy love ; is there aught new in this ?  
Many hath death reft of their wives before.

*Admetus.* My friends, I deem the fortune of my wife  
Happier than mine, though otherwise it seems ;  
For never more shall sorrow touch her breast,  
And she with glory rests from various ills.  
But I, who ought not live, my destined hour  
O'erpassing, shall drag on a mournful life,  
Late taught what sorrow is. How shall I bear  
To enter here ? To whom shall I address  
My speech ? Whose greeting renders my return  
Delightful ? Which way shall I turn ? Within  
In lonely sorrow shall I waste away,  
As widowed of my wife I see my couch,  
The seats deserted where she sate, the rooms  
Wanting her elegance. Around my knees  
My children hang, and weep their mother lost :  
These too lament their mistress now no more.  
This is the scene of misery in my house :  
Abroad, the nuptials of Thessalia's youth  
And the bright circles of assembled dames  
Will but augment my grief : ne'er shall I bear  
To see the loved companions of my wife.  
And if one hates me, he will say, " Behold  
The man, who basely lives, who dared not die,  
But, giving through the meanness of his soul  
His wife, avoided death, yet would be deemed  
A man : he hates his parents, yet himself  
Had not the spirit to die." These ill reports  
Cleave to me : why then wish for longer life,  
On evil tongues thus fallen, and evil days ?

## CHORUS.

*Strophe 1.*

My vent'rous foot delights  
 To tread the Muses' arduous heights ;  
 Their hallowed haunts I love t' explore,  
 And listen to their lore :  
 Yet never could my searching mind  
 Aught, like necessity, resistless find ;  
 No herb of sovereign power to save,  
 Whose virtues Orpheus joyed to trace,  
 And wrote them in the rolls of Thrace ;  
 Nor all that Phœbus gave,  
 Instructing the Asclepian train,  
 When various ills the human frame assail,  
 To heal the wound, to soothe the pain,  
 'Gainst her stern force avail.

*Antistrophe 1.*

Of all the powers divine  
 Alone none dares approach her shrine ;  
 To her no hallowed image stands,  
 No altar she commands ;  
 In vain the victim's blood would flow ;  
 She never deigns to hear the suppliant vow.  
 Never to me mayst thou appear,  
 Dread goddess, with severer mien,  
 That oft in life's past tranquil scene  
 Thou hast been known to wear.  
 By thee Jove works his stern behest :  
 Thy force subdues e'en Scythia's stubborn steel :  
 Nor ever does thy rugged breast  
 The touch of pity feel.

*Strophe 2.*

And now, with ruin pleased,  
 On thee, O king, her hands have seized,  
 And bound thee in her iron chain :  
 Yet her fell force sustain.  
 For from the gloomy realms of night  
 No tears recall the dead to life's sweet light ;

No virtue, though to heaven allied,  
Saves from th' inevitable doom :  
Heroes and sons of gods have died,  
And sunk into the tomb.  
Dear, whilst our eyes her presence blest,  
Dear, in the gloomy mansions of the dead ;  
Most generous she, the noblest, best  
Who graced thy nuptial bed.

*Antistrophe 2.*

Thy wife's sepulchral mound  
Deem not as common, worthless ground,  
That swells their breathless bodies o'er  
Who die, and are no more.  
No : be it honoured as a shrine  
Raised high, and hallowed to some power divine.  
The traveller, as he passes by,  
Shall thither bend his devious way,  
With reverence gaze, and with a sigh  
Smite on his breast, and say,  
"She died of old to save her lord ;  
Now blest among the blest : Hail, power revered ;  
To us thy wonted grace afford !"  
Such vows shall be preferred.  
But see, Admetus, to thy house, I ween,  
Alcmena's son bends his returning steps.

HERCULES, ADMETUS, CHORUS.

*Hercules.* I would speak freely to my friend, Admetus,  
Nor what I blame keep secret in my breast.  
I came to thee amidst thy ills, and thought  
I had been worthy to be proved thy friend.  
Thou toldst me not the obsequies prepared  
Were for thy wife, but in thy house receivdst me  
As if thou grievdst for one of foreign birth.  
I bound my head with garlands, to the gods  
Pouring libations in thy house with grief  
Oppressed. I blame this : yes, in such a state  
I blame this : yet I come not in thine ills  
To give thee pain ; why I return in brief  
Will I unfold. This woman from my hands  
Receive to thy protection, till returned



I bring the Thracian steeds, having there slain  
 The proud Bistonian tyrant ; should I fail,  
 Be that mischance not mine, for much I wish  
 Safe to revisit thee, yet should I fail,  
 I give her to the safeguard of thy house.  
 For with much toil she came into my hands.  
 To such, as dare contend some public games,  
 Which well deserved my toil, I find proposed,  
 I bring her thence, she is the prize of conquest ;  
 For slight assays each victor led away  
 A courser ; but for those of harder proof  
 The conqueror was rewarded from the herd,  
 And with some female graced : victorious there,  
 A prize so noble it were base to slight.  
 Take her to thy protection, not by stealth  
 Obtained, but the reward of many toils ;  
 The time perchance may come when thou wilt thank  
 me.

*Admetus.* Not that I slight thy friendship, or esteem thee  
 Other than noble, wished I to conceal  
 My wife's unhappy fate ; but to my grief  
 It had been added grief, if thou hadst sought  
 Elsewhere the rites of hospitality ;  
 Suffice it that I mourn ills which are mine.  
 This woman, if it may be, give in charge,  
 I beg thee, king, to some Thessalian else,  
 That hath not cause like me to grieve ; in Pheræ  
 Thou mayst find many friends ; call not my woes  
 Fresh to my memory ; never in my house  
 Could I behold her but my tears would flow ;  
 To sorrow add not sorrow ; now enough  
 I sink beneath its weight. Where should her youth  
 With me be guarded ? for her gorgeous vests  
 Proclaim her young ; if mixing with the men  
 She dwell beneath my roof, how shall her fame,  
 Conversing with the youths, be kept unsullied ?  
 It is not easy to restrain the warmth  
 Of that intemperate age ; my care for thee  
 Warns me of this. Or if from them removed  
 I hide her in th' apartments late my wife's,  
 How to my bed admit her ? I should fear  
 A double blame ; my citizens would scorn me

As light, and faithless to the kindest wife  
That died for me, if to her bed I took  
Another blooming bride ; and to the dead  
Behoves me pay the highest reverence  
Due to her merit. And thou, lady, know,  
Whoe'er thou art, that form, that shape, that air  
Resembles my Alcestis. By the gods,  
Remove her from my sight. It is too much,  
I cannot bear it : when I look on her,  
Methinks I see my wife ; this wounds my heart,  
And calls the tears fresh gushing from my eyes.  
This is the bitterness of grief indeed.

*Chorus.* I cannot praise thy fortune ; but behoves thee  
To bear with firmness what the gods assign.

*Hercules.* O that from Jove I had the power to bring  
Back from the mansions of the dead thy wife  
To heaven's fair light, that grace achieving for thee !

*Admetus.* I know thy friendly will. But how can this  
Be done ? The dead return not to this light.

*Hercules.* Check then thy swelling griefs ; with reason rule  
them.

*Admetus.* How easy to advise, but hard to bear !

*Hercules.* What would it profit shouldst thou always groan ?

*Admetus.* I know it ; but I am in love with grief.

*Hercules.* Love to the dead calls forth the ceaseless tear.

*Admetus.* O, I am wretched more than words can speak.

*Hercules.* A good wife hast thou lost, who can gainsay it ?

*Admetus.* Never can life be pleasant to me more.

*Hercules.* Thy sorrow now is new, time will abate it.

*Admetus.* Time, sayst thou ? Yes, the time that brings me  
death.

*Hercules.* Some young and lovely bride will bid it cease.

*Admetus.* No more : what sayst thou ? Never could I  
think—

*Hercules.* Wilt thou still lead a lonely, widowed life ?

*Admetus.* Never shall other woman share my bed.

*Hercules.* And think'st thou this will aught avail the dead ?

*Admetus.* This honour is her due, where'er she be.

*Hercules.* This hath my praise, though near allied to frenzy.

*Admetus.* Praise me, or not, I ne'er will wed again.

*Hercules.* I praise thee that thou'rt faithful to thy wife.

*Admetus.* Though dead, if I betray her may I die !

*Hercules.* Well, take this noble lady to thy house.

*Admetus.* No, by thy father Jove let me entreat thee.

*Hercules.* Not to do this would be the greatest wrong.

*Admetus.* To do it would with anguish rend my heart.

*Hercules.* Let me prevail ; this grace may find its meed.

*Admetus.* O that thou never hadst received this prize !

*Hercules.* Yet in my victory thou art victor with me.

*Admetus.* 'Tis nobly said : yet let this woman go.

*Hercules.* If she must go, she shall : but must she go ?

*Admetus.* She must, if I incur not thy displeasure.

*Hercules.* There is a cause that prompts my earnestness.

*Admetus.* Thou hast prevailed, but much against my will.

*Hercules.* The time will come when thou wilt thank me  
for it.

*Admetus.* Well, if I must receive her, lead her in.

*Hercules.* Charge servants with her ! • No, that must  
not be.

*Admetus.* Lead her thyself then, if thy will incline thee.

*Hercules.* No, to thy hand alone will I commit her.

*Admetus.* I touch her not ; but she hath leave to enter.

*Hercules.* I shall entrust her only to thy hand.

*Admetus.* Thou dost constrain me, king, against my will.

*Hercules.* Venture to stretch thy hand, and touch the  
stranger's.

*Admetus.* I touch her, as I would the headless Gorgon.

*Hercules.* Hast thou her hand ?

*Admetus.* I have.

*Hercules.* Then hold her safe.

Hereafter thou wilt say the son of Jove

Hath been a generous guest : view now her face,

See if she bears resemblance to thy wife,

And thus made happy bid farewell to grief.

*Admetus.* O gods, what shall I say ? 'Tis marvellous,

Exceeding hope. See I my wife indeed ?

Or doth some god distract me with false joy ?

*Hercules.* In very deed dost thou behold thy wife.

*Admetus.* See that it be no phantom from beneath.

*Hercules.* Make not thy friend one that evokes the shades.

*Admetus.* And do I see my wife, whom I entombed ?

*Hercules.* I marvel not that thou art diffident.

*Admetus.* I touch her ; may I speak to her as living ?

*Hercules.* Speak to her ; thou hast all thy heart could wish.

*Admetus.* Dearest of women, do see I again

That face, that person ? This exceeds all hope :

I never thought that I should see thee more.

*Hercules.* Thou hast her ; may no god be envious to thee.

*Admetus.* O, be thou blest, thou generous son of Jove !

Thy father's might protect thee ! Thou alone

Hast raised her to me ; from the realms below

How hast thou brought her to the light of life ?

*Hercules.* I fought with him that lords it o'er the shades.

*Admetus.* Where with the gloomy tyrant didst thou fight ?

*Hercules.* I lay in wait, and seized him at the tomb.

*Admetus.* But wherefore doth my wife thus speechless stand ?

*Hercules.* It is not yet permitted that thou hear

Her voice addressing thee, till from the gods

That rule beneath she be unsanctified

With hallowed rites, and the third morn return.

But lead her in : and as thou'rt just in all

Besides, Admetus, see thou reverence strangers.

Farewell : I go t' achieve the destined toil

For the imperial son of Sthenelus.

*Admetus.* Abide with us, and share my friendly hearth.

*Hercules.* That time will come again ; this demands speed.

*Admetus.* Success attend thee ; safe mayst thou return.

Now to my citizens I give in charge,

And to each chief, that for this blest event

They institute the dance, let the steer bleed,

And the rich altars, as they pay their vows,

Breathe incense to the gods ; for now I rise

To better life, and grateful own the blessing.

*Chorus.* With various hand the gods dispense our fates :

Now showering various blessings, which our hopes

Dared not aspire to ; now controlling ills

We deemed inevitable ; thus the god

To these hath given an end exceeding thought.

Such is the fortune of this happy day.

## MEDEA

### PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

NURSE OF MEDEA.

ATTENDANT ON THE CHILDREN.

MEDEA.

CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN.

CREON.

JASON.

ÆGEUS.

MESSENGER.

THE TWO SONS OF JASON  
AND MEDEA.

*Scene.*—BEFORE THE PALACE OF CREON AT CORINTH.

NURSE.

AH ! would to heaven the Argo ne'er had urged  
Its rapid voyage to the Colchian strand  
'Twixt the Cyanean rocks, nor had the pine  
Been fell in Pelion's forests, nor the hands  
Of those illustrious chiefs, who that famed bark  
Ascended to obtain, the golden fleece  
For royal Pelias, plied the stubborn oar ;  
So to Iolchos' turrets had my Queen  
Medea never sailed, her soul with love  
For Jason smitten, nor, as since her arts  
Prevailed on Pelias' daughters to destroy  
Their father, in this realm of Corinth dwelt  
An exile with her husband and her sons ;  
Thus to the citizens whose land received her  
Had she grown pleasing, and in all his schemes  
Assisted Jason : to the wedded pair,  
Hence bliss supreme arises, when the bond  
Of concord joins them : now their souls are filled  
With ruthless hate, and all affection's lost :  
For false to his own sons, and her I serve,  
With a new consort of imperial birth  
Sleeps the perfidious Jason, to the daughter  
Of Creon wedded, lord of these domains.  
The wretched scorned Medea oft exclaims,  
"O by those oaths, by that right hand thou gav'st  
The pledge of faith !" She then invokes the gods  
To witness what requital she hath found  
From Jason. On a couch she lies, no food  
Receiving, her whole frame subdued by grief ;

And since she marked the treachery of her lord  
 Melts into tears incessant, from the ground  
 Her eyes she never raises, never turns  
 Her face aside, but steadfast as a rock,  
 Or as the ocean's rising billows, hears  
 The counsels of her friends, save when she weeps  
 In silent anguish, with her snowy neck  
 Averted, for her sire, her native land,  
 And home, which she forsaking hither came  
 With him who scorns her now. She from her woes  
 Too late hath learnt how enviable the lot  
 Of those who leave not their paternal roof.  
 She even hates her children, nor with joy  
 Beholds them : much I dread lest she contrive  
 Some enterprise unheard of, for her soul  
 Is vehement, nor will she tamely brook  
 Injurious treatment ; well, full well I know  
 Her temper, which alarms me, lest she steal  
 Into their chamber, where the genial couch  
 Is spread, and with the sword their vitals pierce,  
 Or to the slaughter of the bridegroom add  
 That of the monarch, and in some mischance,  
 Yet more severe than death, herself involve :  
 For dreadful is her wrath, nor will the object  
 Of her aversion gain an easy triumph.  
 But lo, returning from the race, her sons  
 Draw near : they think not of their mother's woes,  
 For youthful souls are strangers to affliction.

ATTENDANT, *with the SONS of JASON and MEDEA*, NURSE.

*Attend.* O thou, who for a length of time hast dwelt  
 Beneath the roofs of that illustrious dame  
 I serve, why stand'st thou at these gates alone  
 Repeating to thyself a doleful tale :  
 Or wherefore by Medea from her presence  
 Art thou dismissed ?

*Nurse.* Old man, O you who tend  
 On Jason's sons, to faithful servants aught  
 Of evil fortune that befalls their lords  
 Is a calamity : but such a pitch  
 Of grief am I arrived at, that I felt

An impulse which constrained me to come forth  
From these abodes, and to the conscious earth  
And heaven proclaim the lost Medea's fate.

*Attend.* Cease not the plaints of that unhappy dame?

*Nurse.* Your ignorance I envy: for her woes  
Are but beginning, nor have yet attained  
Their mid career.

*Attend.* O how devoid of reason,  
If we with terms thus harsh may brand our lords,  
Of ills more recent nothing yet she knows.

*Nurse.* Old man, what mean you? Scruple not to speak.

*Attend.* Nought. What I have already said repents me.

*Nurse.* I by that beard conjure you not to hide  
The secret from your faithful fellow-servant.  
For I the strictest silence will observe  
If it be needful.

*Attend.* Some one I o'erheard  
(Appearing not to listen, as I came  
Where aged men sit near Pirene's fount  
And hurl their dice) say that from Corinth's land  
Creon, the lord of these domains, will banish  
The children with their mother; but I know not  
Whether th' intelligence be true, and wish  
It may prove otherwise.

*Nurse.* Will Jason brook  
Such an injurious treatment of his sons,  
Although he be at variance with their mother

*Attend.* By new connections are all former ties  
Dissolved, and he no longer is a friend  
To this neglected race.

*Nurse.* We shall be plunged  
In utter ruin, if to our old woes,  
Yet unexhausted, any fresh we add.

*Attend.* Be silent, and suppress the dismal tale,  
For 'tis unfit our royal mistress know.

*Nurse.* Hear, O ye children, how your father's soul  
Is turned against you: still, that he may perish  
I do not pray, because he is my lord;  
Yet treacherous to his friends hath he been found.

*Attend.* Who is not treacherous? Hast thou lived so  
long  
Without discerning how self-love prevails

O'er social? Some by glory, some by gain,  
Are prompted. Then what wonder, for the sake  
Of a new consort, if the father slight  
These children?

*Nurse.* Go, all will be well, go in.

Keep them as far as possible away,  
Nor suffer them to come into the presence  
Of their afflicted mother; for her eyes  
Have I just seen with wild distraction fired,  
As if some horrid purpose against them  
She meant to execute; her wrath I know  
Will not be pacified, till on some victim  
It like a thunderbolt from Heaven descends;  
May she assail her foes alone, nor aim  
The stroke at those she ought to hold most dear.

*Medea.* [*within.*] Ah me! how grievous are my woes!  
What means

Can I devise to end this hated life?

*Nurse.* 'Tis as I said: strong agitations seize  
Your mother's heart, her choler's raised. Dear  
children,

Beneath these roofs hie instantly, nor come  
Into her sight, accost her not, beware  
Of these ferocious manners and the rage  
Which boils in that ungovernable spirit.  
Go with the utmost speed, for I perceive  
Too clearly that her plaints, which in thick clouds  
Arise at first, will kindle ere 'tis long  
With tenfold violence. What deeds of horror  
From that high-soaring, that remorseless soul,  
May we expect, when goaded by despair!

[*Exeunt ATTENDANT and SONS.*]

*Medea.* [*within.*] I have endured, alas! I have endured—  
Wretch that I am!—such agonies as call  
For loudest plaints. Ye execrable sons  
Of a devoted mother, perish ye  
With your false sire, and perish his whole house!

*Nurse.* Why should the sons—ah, wretched me!—partake  
Their father's guilt? Why hat'st thou them? Ah me!  
How greatly, O ye children, do I fear  
Lest mischief should befall you: for the souls  
Of kings are prone to cruelty, so seldom



Subdued, and over others wont to rule,  
 That it is difficult for such to change  
 Their angry purpose. Happier I esteem  
 The lot of those who still are wont to live  
 Among their equals. May I thus grow old,  
 If not in splendour, yet with safety blest !  
 For first of all, renown attends the name  
 Of mediocrity, and to mankind  
 Such station is more useful : but not long  
 Can the extremes of grandeur ever last ;  
 And heavier are the curses which it brings  
 When Fortune visits us in all her wrath.

CHORUS, NURSE.

*Chorus.* The voice of Colchos' hapless dame I heard—  
 A clamorous voice, nor yet is she appeased.  
 Speak, O thou aged matron, for her cries  
 I from the innermost apartment heard ;  
 Nor can I triumph in the woes with which  
 This house is visited ; for to my soul  
 Dear are its interests.

*Nurse.* This whole house is plunged  
 In ruin, and its interests are no more.  
 While Corinth's palace to our lord affords  
 A residence, within her chamber pines  
 My mistress, and the counsels of her friends  
 Afford no comfort to her tortured soul.

*Medea.* [*within.*] O that a flaming thunderbolt from Heaven  
 Would pierce this brain ! for what can longer life  
 To me avail ? Fain would I seek repose  
 In death, and cast away this hated being.

*Chorus.* Heard'st thou, all-righteous Jove, thou fostering earth,  
 And thou, O radiant lamp of day, what plaints,  
 What clamorous plaints this miserable wife  
 Hath uttered ? Through insatiable desire,  
 Ah why would you precipitate your death ?  
 O most unwise ! These imprecations spare.  
 What if your lord's affections are engaged  
 By a new bride, reproach him not, for Jove  
 Will be the dread avenger of your wrongs ;  
 Nor melt away with unavailing grief,  
 Weeping for the lost partner of your bed.

*Medea.* [*within.*] Great Themis and Diana, awful queen,  
Do ye behold the insults I endure,  
Though by each oath most holy I have bound  
That execrable husband. May I see  
Him and his bride, torn limb from limb, bestrew  
The palace ; me have they presumed to wrong,  
Although I ne'er provoked them. O my sire,  
And thou my native land, whence I with shame  
Departed when my brother I had slain.

*Nurse.* Heard ye not all she said, with a loud voice  
Invoking Themis, who fulfils the vow,  
And Jove, to whom the tribes of men look up  
As guardian of their oaths. Medea's rage  
Can by no trivial vengeance be appeased.

*Chorus.* Could we but draw her hither, and prevail  
On her to hear the counsels we suggest,  
Then haply might she check that bitter wrath,  
That vehemence of temper ; for my zeal  
Shall not be spared to aid my friends. But go,  
And say, " O hasten, ere to those within  
Thou do some mischief, for these sorrows rush  
With an impetuous tempest on thy soul."

*Nurse.* This will I do ; though there is cause to fear  
That on my mistress I shall ne'er prevail :  
Yet I my labour gladly will bestow.  
Though such a look she on her servants casts  
As the ferocious lioness who guards  
Her tender young, when anyone draws near  
To speak to her. Thou wouldst not judge amiss,  
In charging folly and a total want  
Of wisdom on the men of ancient days,  
Who for their festivals invented hymns,  
And to the banquet and the genial board  
Confined those actions which o'er human life  
Diffuse ecstatic pleasures : but no artist  
Hath yet discovered, by the tuneful song,  
And varied modulations of the lyre,  
How we those piercing sorrows may assuage  
Whence slaughters and such horrid mischief spring  
As many a prosperous mansion have o'erthrown.  
Could music interpose her healing aid  
In these inveterate maladies, such gift

Had been the first of blessings to mankind :  
 But, 'midst choice viands and the circling bowl,  
 Why should those minstrels strain their useless throat?  
 To cheer the drooping heart, convivial joys  
 Are in themselves sufficient. [Exit NURSE.

*Chorus.*

Mingled groans

And lamentations burst upon mine ear :  
 She in the bitterness of soul exclaims  
 Against her impious husband, who betrayed  
 His plighted faith. By grievous wrongs oppress,  
 She the vindictive gods invokes, and Themis,  
 Jove's daughter, guardian of the sacred oath,  
 Who o'er the waves to Greece benignly steered  
 Their bark adventurous, launched in midnight gloom,  
 Through ocean's gates which never can be closed !

MEDEA, CHORUS.

*Medea.* From my apartment, ye Corinthian dames,  
 Lest ye my conduct censure, I come forth :  
 For I have known full many who obtained  
 Fame and high rank ; some to the public gaze  
 Stood ever forth, while others, in a sphere  
 More distant, chose their merits to display :  
 Nor yet a few, who, studious of repose,  
 Have with malignant obloquy been called  
 Devoid of spirit : for no human eyes  
 Can form a just discernment ; at one glance,  
 Before the inmost secrets of the heart  
 Are clearly known, a bitter hate 'gainst him  
 Who never wronged us they too oft inspire.  
 But 'tis a stranger's duty to adopt  
 The manners of the land in which he dwells ;  
 Nor can I praise that native, led astray  
 By mere perverseness and o'erweening folly,  
 Who bitter enmity incurs from those  
 Of his own city. But, alas ! my friends,  
 This unforeseen calamity hath withered  
 The vigour of my soul. I am undone,  
 Bereft of every joy that life can yield,  
 And therefore wish to die. For as to him,  
 My husband, whom it did import me most  
 To have a thorough knowledge of, he proves

The worst of men. But sure among all those  
Who have with breath and reason been endued,  
We women are the most unhappy race.  
First, with abundant gold are we constrained  
To buy a husband, and in him receive  
A haughty master. Still doth there remain  
One mischief than this mischief yet more grievous,  
The hazard whether we procure a mate  
Worthless or virtuous : for divorces bring  
Reproach to woman, nor must she renounce  
The man she wedded ; as for her who comes  
Where usages and edicts, which at home  
She learnt not, are established, she the gift  
Of divination needs to teach her how  
A husband must be chosen : if aright  
These duties we perform, and he the yoke  
Of wedlock with complacency sustains,  
Ours is a happy life ; but if we fail  
In this great object, better 'twere to die.  
For, when afflicted by domestic ills,  
A man goes forth, his choler to appease,  
And to some friend or comrade can reveal  
What he endures ; but we to him alone  
For succour must look up. They still contend  
That we, at home remaining, lead a life  
Exempt from danger, while they launch the spear :  
False are these judgments ; rather would I thrice,  
Armed with a target, in th' embattled field  
Maintain my stand, than suffer once the throes  
Of childbirth. But this language suits not you :  
This is your native city, the abode  
Of your loved parents, every comfort life  
Can furnish is at hand, and with your friends  
You here converse : but I, forlorn, and left  
Without a home, am by that husband scorned  
Who carried me from a Barbarian realm.  
Nor mother, brother, or relation now  
Have I, to whom I 'midst these storms of woe,  
Like an auspicious haven, can repair.  
Thus far I therefore crave ye will espouse  
My interests, as if haply any means  
Or any stratagem can be devised

For me with justice to avenge these wrongs  
 On my perfidious husband, on the king  
 Who to that husband's arms his daughter gave,  
 And the new-wedded princess ; to observe  
 Strict silence. For although at other times  
 A woman, filled with terror, is unfit  
 For battle, or to face the lifted sword,  
 She when her soul by marriage wrongs is fired,  
 Thirsts with a rage unparalleled for blood.

*Chorus.* The silence you request I will observe,  
 For justly on your lord may you inflict  
 Severest vengeance : still I wonder not  
 If your disastrous fortunes you bewail :  
 But Creon I behold who wields the sceptre  
 Of these domains ; the monarch hither comes  
 His fresh resolves in person to declare.

CREON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

*Creon.* Thee, O Medea, who, beneath those looks  
 Stern and forbidding, harbour'st 'gainst thy lord  
 Resentment, I command to leave these realms  
 An exile ; for companions of thy flight  
 Take both thy children with thee, nor delay.  
 Myself pronounce this edict : I my home  
 Will not revisit, from the utmost bounds  
 Of this domain, till I have cast thee forth.

*Medea.* Ah, wretched me ! I utterly am ruined :  
 For in the swift pursuit, my ruthless foes,  
 Each cable loosing, have unfurled their sails,  
 Nor can I land on any friendly shore  
 To save myself, yet am resolved to speak,  
 Though punishment impend. What cause, O Creon  
 Have you for banishing me ?

*Creon.* Thee I dread  
 (No longer is it needful to disguise  
 My thoughts) lest 'gainst my daughter thou contrive,  
 Some evil such as medicine cannot reach.  
 Full many incidents conspire to raise  
 This apprehension : with a deep-laid craft  
 Art thou endued, expert in the device  
 Of mischiefs numberless, thou also griev'st  
 Since thou art severed from thy husband's bed

I am informed, too, thou hast menaced vengeance  
'Gainst me, because my daughter I bestowed  
In marriage, and the bridegroom, and his bride.  
Against these threats I therefore ought to guard  
Before they take effect ; and better far  
Is it for me, O woman, to incur  
Thy hatred now, than, soothed by thy mild words,  
Hereafter my forbearance to bewail.

\* *Medea.* Not now, alas ! for the first time, but oft  
To me, O Creon, hath opinion proved  
Most baleful, and the source of grievous woes.  
Nor ever ought the man, who is possess  
Of a sound judgment, to train up his children  
To be too wise : for they who live exempt  
From war and all its toils, the odious name  
Among their fellow-citizens acquire  
Of abject sluggards. If to the unwise  
You some fresh doctrine broach, you are esteemed  
Not sapient, but a trifler : when to those  
Who in their own conceit possess each branch  
Of knowledge, you in state affairs obtain  
Superior fame, to them you grow obnoxious.  
I also feel the grievance I lament ;  
Some envy my attainments, others think  
My temper uncomplying, though my wisdom  
Is not transcendent. But from me it seems  
You apprehend some violence ; dismiss  
Those fears ; my situation now is such,  
O Creon, that to monarchs I can give  
No umbrage : and in what respect have you  
Treated me with injustice ? You bestowed  
Your daughter where your inclination led.  
Though I abhor my husband, I suppose  
That you have acted wisely, nor repine  
At your prosperity. Conclude the match ;  
Be happy : but allow me in this land  
Yet to reside ; for I my wrongs will bear  
In silence, and to my superiors yield.

*Creon.* Soft is the sound of thy persuasive words,  
But in my soul I feel the strongest dread  
Lest thou devise some mischief, and now less  
Than ever can I trust thee ; for 'gainst those

Of hasty tempers with more ease we guard,  
 Or men or women, than the silent foe  
 Who acts with prudence. Therefore be thou gone  
 With speed, no answer make : it is decreed,  
 Nor hast' thou art sufficient to avert  
 Thy doom of banishment ; for well aware  
 Am I thou hat'st me.

*Medea.* Spare me, by those knees  
 And your new-wedded daughter, I implore.

*Creon.* Lavish of words, thou never shalt persuade me.

*Medea.* Will you then drive me hence, and to my prayers  
 No reverence yield?

*Creon.* I do not love thee more  
 Than those of my own house.

*Medea.* With what regret  
 Do I remember thee, my native land

*Creon.* Except my children, I hold nought so dear.

*Medea.* To mortals what a dreadful scourge is love !

*Creon.* As fortune dictates, love becomes, I ween,  
 Either a curse or blessing.

*Medea.* Righteous Jove,  
 Let not the author of my woes escape thee.

*Creon.* Away vain woman, free me from my cares.

*Medea.* No lack of cares have I.

*Creon.* Thou from this spot  
 Shalt' by my servants' hands ere long be torn.

*Medea.* Not thus, O Creon, I your mercy crave.

*Creon.* To trouble me, it seems, thou art resolved.

*Medea.* I will depart, nor urge this fond request.

*Creon.* Why dost thou struggle then, nor from our realm  
 Withdraw thyself?

*Medea.* Allow me this one day  
 Here to remain, till my maturer thoughts  
 Instruct me to what region I can fly,  
 Where for my sons find shelter, since their sire  
 Attends not to the welfare of his race.  
 Take pity on them, for you also know  
 What 'tis to be a parent, and must feel  
 Parental love : as for myself, I heed not  
 The being doomed to exile, but lament  
 Their hapless fortunes.

*Creon.* No tyrannic rage

Within this bosom dwells, but pity oft  
Hath warped my better judgment, and though now  
My error I perceive, shall thy bequest  
Be granted. Yet of this must I forewarn thee :  
If when to-morrow with his orient beams  
Phœbus the world revisits, he shall view  
Thee and thy children still within the bounds  
Of these domains, thou certainly shalt die—  
Th' irrevocable sentence is pronounced.  
But if thou needs must tarry, tarry here  
This single day, for in so short a space  
Thou canst not execute the ills I dread. [*Exit CREON.*]

*Chorus.* Alas ! thou wretched woman, overpowered  
By thy afflictions, whither wilt thou turn ?  
What hospitable board, what mansion, find.  
Or country to protect thee from these ills ?  
Into what storms of misery have the gods  
Caused thee to rush !

*Medea.* On every side distress  
Assails me : who can contradict this truth ?  
Yet think not that my sorrows thus shall end.  
By yon new-wedded pair must be sustained  
Dire conflicts, and no light or trivial woes  
By them who in affinity are joined  
With this devoted house. Can ye suppose  
That I would e'er have soothed him, had no gain  
Or stratagem induced me ? Else to him  
Never would I have spoken, nor once raised  
My suppliant hands. But now is he so lost  
In folly, that, when all my schemes with ease  
He might have baffled, if he from this land  
Had cast me forth, he grants me to remain  
For this one day, and ere the setting sun  
Three of my foes will I destroy—the sire,  
The daughter, and my husband : various means  
Have I of slaying them, and, O my friends,  
Am at a loss to fix on which I first  
Shall undertake, or to consume with flames  
The bridal mansion, or a dagger plunge  
Into their bosoms, entering unperceived  
The chamber where they sleep. But there remains  
One danger to obstruct my path : if caught



## Euripides

Stealing into the palace, and intent  
 On such emprise, in death shall I afford  
 A subject of derision to my foes.  
 This obviqus method were the best, in which  
 I am most skilled, to take their lives away  
 By sorceries. Be it so ; suppose them dead.  
 What city will receive me for its guest,  
 What hospitable foreigner afford  
 A shelter in his land, or to his hearth  
 Admit, or snatch me from impending fate?  
 Alas ! I have no friend. I will delay  
 A little longer therefore ; if perchance,  
 To screen me from destruction, I can find  
 Some fortress, then I in this deed of blood  
 With artifice and silence will engage ;  
 But, if by woes inextricable urged  
 Too closely, snatching up the dagger them  
 Am I resolved to slay, although myself  
 Must perish too ; for courage unappalled  
 This bosom animates. By that dread queen,  
 By her whom first of all th' immortal powers  
 I worship, and to aid my bold emprise  
 Have chosen, the thrice awful Hecaté,  
 Who in my innermost apartment dwells,  
 Not one of them shall triumph in the pangs  
 With which they wound my heart ; for I will  
 render

This spousal rite to them a plenteous source  
 Of bitterness and mourning—they shall rue  
 Their union, rue my exile from this land.  
 But now come on, nor, O Medea, spare  
 Thy utmost science to devise and frame  
 Deep stratagems, with swift career advance  
 To deeds of horror. Such a strife demands  
 Thy utmost courage. Hast thou any sense  
 Of these indignities ? Nor is it fit  
 That thou, who spring'st from an illustrious sire,  
 And from that great progenitor the sun,  
 Shouldst be derided by the impious brood  
 Of Sisypus, at Jason's nuptial feast  
 Exposed to scorn : for thou hast ample skill  
 To right thyself. Although by Nature formed

Without a genius apt for virtuous deeds,  
We women are in mischiefs most expert.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

Now upward to their source the rivers flow,  
And in a retrograde career  
Justice and all the baffled virtues go.  
The views of man are insincere,  
Nor to the gods though he appeal,  
And with an oath each promise seal,  
Can he be trusted. Yet doth veering fame  
Loudly assert the female claim,  
Causing our sex to be renowned,  
And our whole lives with glory crowned.  
No longer shall we mourn the wrongs  
Of slanderous and inhuman tongues.

I. 2.

Nor shall the Muses, as in ancient days,  
Make the deceit of womankind  
The constant theme of their malignant lays.  
For ne'er on our uncultured mind  
Hath Phœbus, god of verse, bestowed  
Genius to frame the lofty ode ;  
Else had we waked the lyre, and in reply  
With descants on man's infamy  
Oft lengthened out th' opprobrious page.  
Yet may we from each distant age  
Collect such records as disgrace  
Both us and man's imperious race.

II. I.

By love distracted, from thy native strand,  
Thou 'twixt the ocean's clashing rocks didst sail  
But now, loathed inmate of a foreign land,  
Thy treacherous husband's loss art doomed to  
wail.  
O hapless matron, overwhelmed with woe,  
From this unpitying realm dishonoured must thou go.

## II. 2.

No longer sacred oaths their credit bear,  
 And virtuous shame hath left the Grecian plain,  
 She mounfs to Heaven, and breathes a purer air.  
 For thee doth no paternal house remain  
 The sheltering haven from affliction's tides ;  
 Over these hostile roofs a mightier queen presides.

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

*Jason.* Not now for the first time, but oft, full oft  
 Have I observed that anger is a pest  
 The most unruly. For when in this land,  
 These mansions, you in peace might have abode,  
 By patiently submitting to the will  
 Of your superiors, you, for empty words,  
 Are doomed to exile. Not that I regard  
 Your calling Jason with incessant rage  
 The worst of men ; but for those bitter taunts  
 With which you have reviled a mighty king,  
 Too mild a penalty may you esteem  
 Such banishment. I still have soothed the wrath  
 Of the offended monarch, still have wished  
 That you might here continue ; but no bounds  
 Your folly knows, nor can that tongue e'er cease  
 To utter menaces against your lords ;  
 Hence from these regions justly are you doomed  
 To be cast forth. But with unwearied love  
 Attentive to your interest am I come,  
 Lest with your children you by cruel want  
 Should be encompassed ; exile with it brings  
 Full many evils. Me, though you abhor,  
 To you I harbour no unfriendly thought.

*Medea.* Thou worst of villains (for this bitter charge  
 Against thy abject cowardice my tongue  
 May justly urge), com'st thou to me, O wretch,  
 Who to the gods art odious, and to me  
 And all the human race ? It is no proof  
 Of courage, or of steadfastness, to face  
 Thy injured friends, but impudence, the worst  
 Of all diseases. Yet hast thou done well  
 In coming : I by uttering the reproaches

Which thou deservest shall ease my burdened soul,  
And thou wilt grieve to hear them. With th' events  
Which happened first will I begin my charge.  
Each Grecian chief who in the Argo sailed  
Knows how from death I saved thee, when to yoke  
The raging bulls whose nostrils poured forth flames,  
And sow the baleful harvest, thou wert sent :  
Then having slain the dragon, who preserved .  
With many a scaly fold the golden fleece,  
Nor ever closed in sleep his watchful eyes,  
I caused the morn with its auspicious beams  
To shine on thy deliverance ; but, my sire  
And native land betraying, came with thee  
To Pelion, and Iolchos' gates : for love  
Prevailed o'er reason. Pelias next I slew—  
Most wretched death—by his own daughters' hands,  
And thus delivered thee from all thy fears.  
Yet though to me, O most ungrateful man,  
Thus much indebted, hast thou proved a traitor,  
And to the arms of this new consort fled,  
Although a rising progeny is thine.  
Hadst thou been childless, 'twere a venial fault  
In thee to court another for thy bride.  
But vanished is the faith which oaths erst bore,  
Nor can I judge whether thou think'st the gods  
Who ruled the world have lost their ancient power  
Or that fresh laws at present are in force  
Among mankind, because thou to thyself  
Art conscious, thou thy plighted faith has broken.  
O my right hand, which thou didst oft embrace,  
Oft to these knees a suppliant cling ! How vainly  
Did I my virgin purity yield up  
To a perfidious husband, led astray  
By flattering hopes ! Yet I to thee will speak  
As if thou wert a friend, and I expected  
From thee some mighty favour to obtain :  
Yet thou, if strictly questioned, must appear  
More odious. Whither shall I turn me now ?  
To those deserted mansions of my father,  
Which, with my country, I to thee betrayed,  
And hither came ; or to the wretched daughters  
Of Pelias ? They forsooth, whose sire I slew,

Beneath their roofs with kindness would receive me.  
 'Tis even thus : by those of my own house  
 Am I detested, and, to serve thy cause,  
 Those very friends, whom least of all I ought  
 To have unkindly treated, have I made  
 My enemies. But eager to repay  
 Such favours, 'mongst unnumbered Grecian dames,  
 On me superior bliss hast thou bestowed,  
 And I, unhappy woman, find in thee  
 A husband who deserves to be admir'd  
 For his fidelity. But from this realm  
 When I am exiled, and by every friend  
 Deserted, with my children left forlorn,  
 A glorious triumph, in thy bridal hour,  
 To thee will it afford, if those thy sons,  
 And I who saved thee, should like vagrants roam.  
 Wherefore, O Jove, didst thou instruct mankind  
 How to distinguish by undoubted marks  
 Counterfeit gold, yet in the front of vice  
 Impress no brand to show the tainted heart?

*Chorus.* How sharp their wrath, how hard to be appeased,  
 When friends with friends begin the cruel strife.

*Jason.* I ought not to be rash, it seems, in speech,  
 But like the skilful pilot, who, with sails  
 Scarce half unfurled, his bark more surely guides,  
 Escape, O woman, your ungoverned tongue.  
 Since you the benefits on me conferred  
 Exaggerate in so proud a strain, I deem  
 That I to Venus only, and no god  
 Or man beside, my prosperous voyage owe.  
 Although a wondrous subtlety of soul  
 To you belong, 'twere an invidious speech  
 For me to make should I relate how Love  
 By his inevitable shafts constrained you  
 To save my life. I will not therefore state  
 This argument too nicely, but allow,  
 As you did aid me, it was kindly done.  
 But by preserving me have you gained more  
 Than you bestowed, as I shall prove : and first,  
 Transplanted from barbaric shores, you dwell  
 In Grecian regions, and have here been taught  
 To act as justice and the laws ordain,

Nor follow the caprice of brutal strength.  
By all the Greeks your wisdom is perceived,  
And you acquire renown ; but had you still  
Inhabited that distant spot of earth,  
You never had been named. I would not wish  
For mansions heaped with gold, or to exceed  
The sweetest notes of Orpheus' magic lyre,  
Were those unfading wreaths which fame bestows  
From me withheld by fortune. I thus far  
On my own labours only have discoursed.  
For you this odious strife of words began.  
But in espousing Creon's royal daughter,  
With which you have reproached me, I will prove  
That I in acting thus am wise and chaste,  
That I to you have been the best of friends,  
And to our children. But make no reply.  
Since hither from Iolchos' land I came,  
Accompanied by many woes, and such  
As could not be avoided, what device  
More advantageous could an exile frame  
Than wedding the king's daughter? Not through  
hate

To you, which you reproach me with, not smitten  
With love for a new consort, or a wish  
The number of my children to augment :  
For those we have already might suffice,  
And I complain not. But to me it seemed  
Of great importance that we both might live  
As suits our rank, nor suffer abject need,  
Well knowing that each friend avoids the poor.  
I also wished to educate our sons  
In such a manner as befits my race  
And with their noble brothers yet unborn,  
Make them one family, that thus, my house  
Cementing, I might prosper. In some measure  
Is it your interest too that by my bride  
I should have sons, and me it much imports,  
By future children, to provide for those  
Who are in being. Have I judged amiss?  
You would not censure me, unless your soul  
Were by a rival stung. But your whole sex  
Hath these ideas ; if in marriage blest

Ye deem nought wanting, but if some reverse  
 Of fortune e'er betide the nuptial couch,  
 All that was good and lovely ye abhor.  
 Far better were it for the human race  
 Had children been produced by other means,  
 No females e'er existing : hence might man  
 Exempt from every evil have remained.

*Chorus.* Thy words hast thou with specious art adorned,  
 Yet thou to me (it is against my will  
 That I such language hold), O Jason, seem'st  
 Not to have acted justly in betraying  
 Thy consort.

*Medea.* From the many I dissent  
 In many points : for, in my judgment, he  
 Who tramples on the laws, but can express  
 His thoughts with plausibility, deserves  
 Severest punishment : for that injustice  
 On which he glories, with his artful tongue,  
 That he a fair appearance can bestow,  
 He dares to practise, nor is truly wise.  
 No longer then this specious language hold  
 To me, who by one word can strike thee dumb.  
 Hadst thou not acted with a base design,  
 It was thy duty first to have prevailed  
 On me to give consent, ere these espousals  
 Thou hadst contracted, nor kept such design  
 A secret from thy friends.

*Jason.* You would have served  
 My cause most gloriously, had I disclosed  
 To you my purposed nuptials, when the rage  
 Of that proud heart still unsubdued remains.

*Medea.* Thy real motive was not what thou sayst,  
 But a Barbarian wife, in thy old age,  
 Might have appeared to tarnish thy renown.

*Jason.* Be well assured, love urged me not to take  
 The daughter of the monarch to my bed.  
 But 'twas my wish to save you from distress,  
 As I already have declared, and raise  
 Some royal brothers to our former sons,  
 Strengthening with fresh supports our shattered  
 house.

*Medea.* May that prosperity which brings remorse

Be never mine, nor riches such as sting  
The soul with anguish.

*Jason.* Are you not aware  
You soon will change your mind, and grow more  
wise?  
Forbear to spurn the blessings you possess,  
Nor droop beneath imaginary woes,  
When you are happy.

*Medea.* Scoff at my distress,  
For thou hast an asylum to receive thee :  
But from this land am I constrained to roam  
A lonely exile.

*Jason.* This was your own choice :  
Accuse none else.

*Medea.* What have I done—betrayed  
My plighted faith and sought a foreign bed?

*Jason.* You uttered impious curses 'gainst the king.

*Medea.* I also in thy mansions am accursed.

*Jason.* With you I on these subjects will contend  
No longer. But speak freely, what relief,  
Or for the children or your exiled state,  
You from my prosperous fortunes would receive :  
For with a liberal hand am I inclined  
My bounties to confer, and hence despatch  
Such tokens, as to hospitable kindness  
Will recommend you. Woman, to refuse  
These offers were mere folly ; from your soul  
Banish resentment, and no trifling gain  
Will hence ensue.

*Medea.* No use I of thy friends  
Will make, nor aught accept ; thy presents spare,  
For nothing which the wicked man can give  
Proves beneficial.

*Jason.* I invoke the gods  
To witness that I gladly would supply  
You and your children with whate'er ye need :  
But you these favours loathe, and with disdain  
Repel your friends : hence an increase of woe  
Shall be your lot.

*Medea.* Be gone ; for thou, with love  
For thy young bride inflamed, too long remain'st  
Without the palace. Wed her ; though perhaps



(Yet with submission to the righteous gods,  
This I announce) such marriage thou mayst rue.  
[Exit JASON.]

## CHORUS.

## ODE.

## I. 1.

Th' immoderate loves in their career,  
Nor glory nor esteem attends,  
But when the Cyprian queen descends  
Benignant from her starry sphere,  
No goddess can more justly claim  
From man the grateful prayer.  
Thy wrath, O Venus, still forbear,  
Nor at my tender bosom aim  
That venom'd arrow, ever wont t' inspire  
Winged from thy golden bow, the pangs of keen desire.

## I. 2.

May I in modesty delight,  
Best present which the gods can give,  
Nor torn by jarring passions live  
A prey to wrath and cankered spite,  
Still envious of a rival's charms,  
Nor rouse the endless strife  
While on my soul another wife  
Impresses vehement alarms :  
On us, dread queen, thy mildest influence shed,  
Thou who discern'st each crime that stains the nuptial bed.

## II. 1.

My native land, and dearest home !  
May I ne'er know an exiled state,  
Nor be it ever my sad fate  
While from thy well-known bourn I roam,  
My hopeless anguish to bemoan.  
Rather let death, let death  
Take at that hour my forfeit breath,  
For surely never was there known,  
On earth a curse so great as to exceed,  
From his loved country torn, the wretched exile's need.

II. 2.

These eyes attest thy piteous tale,  
Which not from fame alone we know ;  
But, O thou royal dame, thy woe  
No generous city doth bewail,  
Nor one among thy former friends.  
Abhorred by Heaven and earth,  
Perish the wretch devoid of worth,  
Engrossed by mean and selfish ends,  
Whose heart expands not those he loved to aid ;  
Never may I lament attachments thus repaid.

ÆGEUS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

*Ægeus.* Medea, hail ! for no man can devise  
Terms more auspicious to accost his friends.

*Medea.* And you, O son of wise Pandion, hail  
Illustrious Ægeus. But to these domains  
Whence came you ?

*Ægeus.* From Apollo's ancient shrine.

*Medea.* But to that centre of the world, whence sounds  
Prophetic issue, why did you repair ?

*Ægeus.* To question by what means I may obtain  
A race of children.

*Medea.* By the gods, inform me,  
Are you still doomed to drag a childless life ?

*Ægeus.* Such is the influence of some adverse demon.

*Medea.* Have you a wife, or did you never try  
The nuptial yoke ?

*Ægeus.* With wedlock's sacred bonds  
I am not unacquainted.

*Medea.* On the subject  
Of children, what did Phœbus say ?

*Ægeus.* His words  
Were such as mortals cannot comprehend.

*Medea.* Am I allowed to know the god's reply ?

*Ægeus.* Thou surely art : such mystery to expound  
There needs the help of thy sagacious soul.

*Medea.* Inform me what the oracle pronounced,  
If I may hear it.

*Ægeus.* "The projecting foot,  
Thou, of the vessel must not dare to loose"—

*Medea.* Till you do what, or to what region come?

*Ægeus.* "Till thou return to thy paternal lares."

*Medea.* But what are you in need of, that you'd steer  
Your bark to Corinth's shores?

*Ægeus.* A king, whose name  
Is Pittheus, o'er Troezen's realm presides.

*Medea.* That most religious man, they say, is son  
Of Pelops.

*Ægeus.* I with him would fain discuss  
The god's prophetic voice.

*Medea.* For he is wise,  
And in this science long hath been expert.

*Ægeus.* Dearest to me of those with whom I formed  
A league of friendship in the embattled field.

*Medea.* But, O may you be happy, and obtain  
All that you wish for.

*Ægeus.* Why those downcast eyes,  
That wasted form?

*Medea.* O Ægeus, he I wedded  
To me hath proved of all mankind most base.

*Ægeus.* What mean'st thou? In plain terms thy grief declare.

*Medea.* Jason hath wronged me, though without a cause.

*Ægeus.* Be more explicit, what injurious treatment  
Complain'st thou of?

*Medea.* To me hath he preferred  
Another wife, the mistress of this house.

*Ægeus.* Dared he to act so basely?

*Medea.* Be assured  
That I, whom erst he loved, am now forsaken.

*Ægeus.* What amorous passion triumphs o'er his soul?  
Or doth he loathe thy bed?

*Medea.* 'Tis mighty love,  
That to his first attachment makes him false.

*Ægeus.* Let him depart then, if he be so void  
Of honour as thou sayst.

*Medea.* He sought to form  
Alliance with a monarch.

*Ægeus.* Who bestows  
On him a royal bride? Conclude thy tale.

*Medea.* Creon, the ruler of this land.

*Ægeus.* Thy sorrows  
Are then excusable.

*Medea.*

I am undone,

And banished hence.

*Ægeus.*

By whom? There's not a word

Thou utter'st but unfolds fresh scenes of woe.

*Medea.* Me from this realm to exile Creon drives.*Ægeus.* Doth Jason suffer this? I cannot praise  
Such conduct.*Medea.*

Not in words: though he submits

Without reluctance. But I by that beard,  
 And by those knees, a wretched suppliant, crave  
 Your pity; see me not cast forth forlorn,  
 But to your realms and to your social hearth  
 Receive me as a guest; so may your desire  
 For children be accomplished by the gods,  
 And happiness your close of life attend.  
 But how important a discovery Fortune  
 To you here makes you are not yet apprised:  
 For destitute of heirs will I permit you  
 No longer to remain, but through my aid  
 Shall you have sons, such potent drugs I know.

*Ægeus.*

Various inducements urge me to comply  
 With this request, O woman; first an awe  
 For the immortal gods, and then the hope  
 That I the promised issue shall obtain.  
 On what my senses scarce can comprehend  
 I will rely. O that thy arts may prove  
 Effectual! Thee, if haply thou arriv'st  
 In my domain, with hospitable rites  
 Shall it be my endeavour to receive,  
 As justice dictates: but to thee, thus much  
 It previously behoves me to announce:  
 I will not take thee with me from this realm;  
 But to my house if of thyself thou come  
 Thou a secure asylum there shalt find,  
 Nor will I yield thee up to any foe.  
 But hence without my aid must thou depart,  
 For I, from those who in this neighbouring land  
 Of Corinth entertain me as their guest,  
 Wish to incur no censure.

*Medea.*

Your commands

Shall be obeyed: but would you plight your  
 faith

That you this promise will to me perform,  
A noble friend in you shall I have found.

*Ægeus.* Believ'st thou not? Whence rise these anxious  
doub.s?

*Medea.* In you I trust ; though Pelias' hostile race  
And Creon's hate pursue me : but, if bound  
By the firm sanction of a solemn oath,  
You will not suffer them with brutal force  
To drag me from your realm, but having entered  
Into such compact, and by every god  
Sworn to protect me, still remain a friend,  
Nor hearken to their embassies. My fortune  
Is in its wane, but wealth to them belongs,  
And an imperial mansion.

*Ægeus.* In these words  
Hast thou expressed great forethought : but if  
thus

Thou art disposed to act, I my consent  
Will not refuse ; for I shall be more safe  
If to thy foes some plausible excuse  
I can allege, and thee more firmly stablsh.  
But say thou first what gods I shall invoke.

*Medea.* Swear by the earth on which we tread, the sun  
My grandsire, and by all the race of gods.

*Ægeus.* What action, or to do or to forbear?

*Medea.* That from your land you never will expel,  
Nor while you live consent that any foe  
Shall tear me thence.

*Ægeus.* By earth, the radiant sun,  
And every god I swear, I to the terms  
Thou hast proposed will steadfastly adhere.

*Medea.* This may suffice. But what if you infringe  
Your oath, what punishment will you endure?

*Ægeus.* Each curse that can befall the impious man.

*Medea.* Depart, and prosper : all things now advance  
In their right track, and with the utmost speed  
I to your city will direct my course,  
When I have executed those designs  
I meditate, and compassed what I wish.

\* [Exit ÆGEUS.]

\* *Chorus.* But thee, O king, may Maia's wingéd son  
Lead to thy Athens ; there mayst thou attain

All that thy soul desires, for thou to me,  
O Ægeus, seem'st most generous.

*Medea.*

Awful Jove,

Thou too, O Justice, who art ever joined  
With thundering Jove, and bright Hyperion's  
beams,

You I invoke. Now, O my friends, o'er those  
I hate shall we prevail: 'tis the career  
Of victory that we tread, and I at length  
Have hopes the strictest vengeance on my foes  
To execute: for where we most in need  
Of a protector stood, appeared this stranger,  
The haven of my counsels: we shall fix  
Our cables to this poop, soon as we reach  
That hallowed city where Minerva reigns.  
But now to you the whole of my designs  
Will I relate; look not for such a tale  
As yields delight: some servant will I send  
An interview with Jason to request,  
And on his coming, in the softest words  
Address him; say these matters are well pleasing  
To me, and in the strongest terms applaud  
That marriage with the daughter of the king,  
Which now the traitor celebrates; then add,  
"'Tis for our mutual good, 'tis rightly done."  
But the request which I intend to make  
Is that he here will let my children stay;  
Not that I mean to leave them thus behind,  
Exposed to insults in a hostile realm  
From those I hate; but that my arts may slay  
The royal maid: with presents in their hands,  
A vesture finely wrought and golden crown,  
Will I despatch them; these they to the bride  
Shall bear, that she their exile may reverse:  
If these destructive ornaments she take  
And put them on, both she, and every one  
Who touches her, shall miserably perish—  
My presents with such drugs I will anoint.  
Far as to this relates, here ends my speech.  
But I with anguish think upon a deed  
Of more than common horror, which remains  
By me to be accomplished: for my sons

Am I resolved to slay, them from this arm  
 Shall no man rescue. When I thus have  
 filled

With dire confusion Jason's wretched house,  
 I, from this land, yet reeking with the gore  
 Of my dear sons, will fly, and having dared  
 A deed most impious. For the scornful taunts  
 Of those we hate are not to be endured,  
 Happen what may. Can life be any gain  
 To me who have no country left, no home,  
 No place of refuge? Greatly did I err  
 When I forsook the mansions of my sire,  
 Persuaded by the flattery of that Greek  
 Whom I will punish, if just Heaven permit.  
 For he shall not again behold the children  
 I bore him while yet living. From his bride  
 Nor shall there issue any second race,  
 Since that vile woman by my baleful drugs  
 Vilely to perish have the Fates ordained.  
 None shall think lightly of me, as if weak,  
 Of courage void, or with a soul too tame,  
 But formed by Heaven in a far different mould,  
 The terror of my foes, and to my friends  
 Benignant: for most glorious are the lives  
 Of those who act with such determined zeal.

*Chorus.* Since thy design thus freely thou to us  
 Communicat'st, I, through a wish to serve  
 Thy interests, and a reverence for those laws  
 Which all mankind hold sacred, from thy purpose  
 Exhort thee to desist.

*Medea.* This cannot be :

Yet I from you, because ye have not felt  
 Distress like mine, such language can excuse.

*Chorus.* Thy guiltless children wilt thou dare to slay?

*Medea.* My husband hence more deeply shall I wound.

*Chorus.* But thou wilt of all women be most wretched.

*Medea.* No matter: all the counsels ye can give  
 Are now superfluous. But this instant go  
 And Jason hither bring; for on your faith,  
 In all things I depend; nor these resolves  
 Will you divulge if you your mistress love,  
 And feel a woman's interest in my wrongs.

## CHORUS.

### ODE.

#### I. 1.

Heroes of Erectheus' race  
 To the gods who owe your birth,  
 And in a long succession trace  
 Your sacred origin from earth,  
 Who on wisdom's fruit regale,  
 Purest breezes still inhale,  
 And behold skies ever bright,  
 Wandering through those haunted glades  
 Where fame relates that the Pierian maids,  
 Soothing the soul of man with chaste delight,  
 Taught Harmony to breathe her first enchanting tale.

#### I. 2.

From Cephisus' amber tide,  
 At the Cyprian queen's command,  
 As sing the Muses, are supplied  
 To refresh the thirsty land,  
 Fragrant gales of temperate air ;  
 While around her auburn hair,  
 In a vivid chaplet twined  
 Never-fading roses bloom  
 And scent the champaign with their rich perfume,  
 Love comes in unison with wisdom joined,  
 Each virtue thrives if Beauty lend her fostering care.

#### II. 1.

For its holy streams renowned  
 Can that city, can that state  
 Where friendship's generous train are found  
 Shelter thee from public hate,  
 When, defiled with horrid guilt,  
 Thou thy children's blood hast spilt?  
 Think on this atrocious deed  
 Ere the dagger aim the blow :  
 Around thy knees our suppliant arms we throw ;  
 O doom not, doom them not to bleed.



## II. 2.

How can thy relentless heart  
 All humanity disclaim,  
 Thy lifted arm perform its part?  
 Lost to a sense of honest shame,  
 Canst thou take their lives away  
 And these guiltless children slay?  
 Soon as thou thy sons shalt view,  
 How wilt thou the tear restrain,  
 Or with their blood thy ruthless hands distain,  
 When prostrate they for mercy sue?

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

*Jason.* I at your call am come ; for though such hate  
 To me you bear, you shall not be denied  
 In this request ; but let me hear what else  
 You would solicit.

*Medea.* Jason, I of thee  
 Crave pardon for the hasty words I spoke ;  
 Since just it were that thou shouldst bear my wrath,  
 When by such mutual proofs of love our union  
 Hath been cemented. For I reasoned thus,  
 And in these terms reproached myself : " O wretch,  
 Wretch that I am, what madness fires my breast?  
 Or why 'gainst those who counsel me aright  
 Such fierce resentment harbour? What just cause  
 Have I to hate the rulers of this land,  
 My husband too, who acts but for my good  
 In his espousals with the royal maid,  
 That to my sons he hence may add a race  
 Of noble brothers? Shall not I appease  
 The tempest of my soul? Why, when the gods  
 Confer their choicest blessings, should I grieve?  
 Have not I helpless children? Well I know  
 That we are banished from Thessalia's realm  
 And left without a friend." When I these thoughts  
 Maturely had revolved, I saw how great  
 My folly and how groundless was my wrath.  
 Now therefore I commend, now deem thee wise  
 In forming this connection for my sake :  
 But I was void of wisdom, or had borne

A part in these designs, the genial bed  
 Obsequiously attended, and with joy  
 Performed each menial office for the bride.  
 I will not speak in too reproachful terms  
 Of my own sex ; but we, weak women, are  
 What nature formed us ; therefore our defects  
 Thou must not imitate, nor yet return  
 Folly for folly. I submit and own  
 My judgment was erroneous, but at length  
 Have I formed better counsels. O my sons,  
 Come hither, leave the palace, from those doors  
 Advance, and in a soft persuasive strain  
 With me unite your father to accost,  
 Forget past enmity, and to your friends  
 Be reconciled, for 'twixt us is a league  
 Of peace established, and my wrath subsides.

[*The SONS of JASON and MEDEA enter.*

Take hold of his right hand. Ah me, how great  
 Are my afflictions oft as I revolve  
 A deed of darkness in my labouring soul !  
 How long, alas ! my sons, are ye ordained  
 To live, how long to stretch forth those dear arms ?  
 Wretch that I am ! how much am I disposed  
 To weep ! how subject to each fresh alarm !  
 For I at length desisting from that strife,  
 Which with your sire I rashly did maintain,  
 Feel gushing tears bedew my tender cheek.

*Chorus.* Fresh tears too from these eyes have forced their way ;  
 And may no greater ill than that which now  
 We suffer, overtake us !

*Jason.*

I applaud

Your present conduct, and your former rage  
 Condemn not ; for 'tis natural that the race  
 Of women should be angry when their lord  
 For a new consort trucks them. But your heart  
 Is for the better changed, and you, though late,  
 At length acknowledge the resistless power  
 Of reason ; this is acting like a dame  
 Endued with prudence. But for you, my sons,  
 Abundant safety your considerate sire  
 Hath with the favour of the gods procured,  
 For ye, I trust, shall with my future race

- Bear the first rank in this Corinthian realm,  
 Advance to full maturity ; the rest,  
 Aided by each benignant god, your father  
 Shall soon accomplish. Virtuously trained up  
 May I behold you at a riper age  
 Obtain pre-eminence o'er those I hate.  
 But, ha ! Why with fresh tears do you thus keep  
 Those eyelids moist ? From your averted cheeks  
 Why is the colour fled, or why these words  
 Receive you not with a complacent ear ?
- Medea.* Nothing : my thoughts were busied for these children.
- Jason.* Be of good courage, and for them depend  
 On my protecting care.
- Medea.* I will obey,  
 Nor disbelieve the promise thou hast made :  
 But woman, ever frail, is prone to shed  
 Involuntary tears.
- Jason.* But why bewail  
 With such deep groans these children ?
- Medea.* Them I bore ;  
 And that our sons might live, while to the gods  
 Thou didst address thy vows, a pitying thought  
 Entered my soul ; 'twas whether this could be.  
 But of th' affairs on which thou com'st to hold  
 This conference with me, have I told a part  
 Already, and to thee will now disclose  
 The sequel : since the rulers of this land  
 Resolve to banish me, as well I know  
 That it were best for me to give no umbrage,  
 Or to the king of Corinth, or to thee,  
 By dwelling here : because I to this house  
 Seem to bear enmity, from these domains  
 Will I depart : but urge thy suit to Creon,  
 That under thy paternal care our sons  
 May be trained up, nor from this realm expelled.
- Jason.* Though doubtful of success, I yet am bound  
 To make th' attempt.
- Medea.* Thou rather shouldst enjoin  
 Thy bride her royal father to entreat,  
 That he these children's exile may reverse.
- Jason.* With pleasure ; and I doubt not but on her,  
 If like her sex humane, I shall prevail.

*Medea.* To aid thee in this difficult emprise  
 Shall be my care, for I to her will send  
 Gifts that I know in beauty far exceed  
 The gorgeous works of man ; a tissued vest  
 And golden crown the children shall present,  
 But with the utmost speed these ornaments  
 One of thy menial train must hither bring,  
 For not with one, but with ten thousand blessings  
 Shall she be gratified ; thee, best of men,  
 Obtaining for the partner of her bed,  
 And in possession of those splendid robes  
 Which erst the sun my grandsire did bestow  
 On his descendants : take them in your hands,  
 My children, to the happy royal bride  
 Instantly bear them, and in dower bestow,  
 For such a gift as ought not to be scorned  
 Shall she receive.

*Jason.* Why rashly part with these ?  
 Of tissued robes or gold can you suppose  
 The palace destitute ? These trappings keep,  
 Nor to another give : for if the dame  
 On me place real value, well I know  
 My love she to all treasures will prefer.

*Medea.* Speak not so hastily : the gods themselves  
 By gifts are swayed, as fame relates ; and gold  
 Hath a far greater influence o'er the souls  
 Of mortals than the most persuasive words :  
 With fortune, the propitious heavens conspire  
 To add fresh glories to thy youthful bride,  
 All here submits to her despotic sway.  
 But I my children's exile would redeem,  
 Though at the cost of life, not gold alone.  
 But these adjacent mansions of the king  
 Soon as ye enter, O ye little ones,  
 Your sire's new consort and my queen entreat  
 That ye may not be banished from this land :  
 At the same time these ornaments present,  
 For most important is it that these gifts  
 With her own hands the royal dame receive.  
 Go forth, delay not, and, if ye succeed,  
 Your mother with the welcome tidings greet.

[*Exeunt* ] *ASON and SONS.*

## Euripides

## CHORUS

## ODE

## I. 1.

Now from my soul each hope is fled,  
 I deem those hapless children dead,  
     They rush to meet the wound :  
 Mistrustful of no latent pest  
 Th' exulting bride will seize the gorgeous vest,  
     Her auburn tresses crowned  
 By baleful Pluto, shall she stand,  
 And take the presents with an eager hand.

## I. 2.

The splendid robe of thousand dyes  
 Will fascinate her raptured eyes,  
     And tempt her till she wear  
 The golden diadem, arrayed  
 To meet her bridegroom in th' infernal shade  
     She thus into the snare  
 Of death shall be surprised by fate,  
 Nor 'scape remorseless Atë's direful hate.

## II. 1.

But as for thee whose nuptials bring  
 The proud alliance of a king,  
     'Midst dangers unespied  
 Thou madly rushing, aid'st the blow  
 Ordained by Heaven to lay thy children low,  
     And thy lamented bride :  
 O man, how little dost thou know  
 That o'er thy head impends severest woe !

## II. 2.

Thy anguish I no less bemoan,  
 No less for thee, O mother, groan,  
     Bent on a horrid deed,  
 Thy children who resolv'st to slay,  
 Nor fear'st to take their guiltless lives away.  
     Those innocents must bleed,  
 Because, disdainful of thy charms,  
 The husband flies to a new consort's arms.

ATTENDANT, SONS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

*Attend.* Your sons, my honoured mistress, are set free  
From banishment ; in her own hands those gifts  
With courtesy the royal bride received ;  
Hence have your sons obtained their peace.

*Medea.* No matter.

*Attend.* Why stand you in confusion, when befriended  
By prosperous fortune ?

*Medea.* Ah !

*Attend.* This harsh reception  
Accords not with the tidings which I bring.

*Medea.* Alas ! and yet again I say, alas !

*Attend.* Have I related with unconscious tongue  
Some great calamity, by the fond hope  
Of bearing glad intelligence misled ?

*Medea.* For having told what thou hast told, no blame  
To thee do I impute.

*Attend.* But on the ground  
Why fix those eyes, and shed abundant tears ?

*Medea.* Necessity constrains me : for the gods  
Of Erebus and I in evil hour  
Our baleful machinations have devised.

*Attend.* Be of good cheer ; for in your children still  
Are you successful.

*Medea.* 'Midst the realms of night  
Others I first will plunge. Ah, wretched me !

*Attend.* Not you alone are from your children torn,  
Mortal you are, and therefore must endure  
Calamity with patience.

*Medea.* I these counsels  
Will practise : but go thou into the palace,  
And for the children whatsoe'er to-day  
Is requisite, make ready. [*Exit ATTENDANT.*]

O my sons !

My sons ! ye have a city and a house  
Where, leaving hapless me behind, without  
A mother ye for ever shall reside.  
But I to other realms an exile go,  
Ere any help from you I could derive,  
Or see you blest ; the hymeneal pomp,  
The bride, the genial couch, for you adorn,

And in these hands the kindled torch sustain.  
 How wretched am I through my own perverseness !  
 You, O my sons, I then in vain have nurtured,  
 In vain have toiled, and, wasted with fatigue,  
 Suffered the pregnant matron's grievous throes.  
 On you, in my afflictions, many hopes  
 I founded erst : that ye with pious care  
 Would foster my old age, and on the bier  
 Extend me after death—much envied lot  
 Of mortals ; but these pleasing anxious thoughts  
 Are vanished now ; for, losing you, a life  
 Of bitterness and anguish shall I lead.  
 But as for you, my sons, with those dear eyes  
 Fated no more your mother to behold,  
 Hence are ye hastening to a world unknown.  
 Why do ye gaze on me with such a look  
 Of tenderness, or wherefore smile ? for these  
 Are your last smiles. Ah wretched, wretched me !  
 What shall I do ? My resolution fails.  
 Sparkling with joy now I their looks have seen,  
 My friends, I can no more. To those past schemes  
 I bid adieu, and with me from this land  
 My children will convey. Why should I cause  
 A twofold portion of distress to fall  
 On my own head, that I may grieve the sire  
 By punishing his sons ? This shall not be :  
 Such counsels I dismiss. But in my purpose  
 What means this change ? Can I prefer derision,  
 And with impunity permit the foe  
 To 'scape ? My utmost courage I must rouse :  
 For the suggestion of these tender thoughts  
 Proceeds from an enervate heart. My sons,  
 Enter the regal mansion. [*Exeunt* SONS.]

As for those

Who deem that to be present were unholy  
 While I the destined victims offer up,  
 Let them see to it. This uplifted arm  
 Shall never shrink. Alas ! alas ! my soul  
 Commit not such a deed. Unhappy woman,  
 Desist and spare thy children ; we will live  
 Together, they in foreign realms shall cheer  
 Thy exile. No, by those avenging fiends

Who dwell with Pluto in the realms beneath,  
This shall not be, nor will I ever leave  
My sons to be insulted by their foes.  
They certainly must die ; since then they must,  
I bore and I will slay them : 'tis a deed  
Resolved on, nor my purpose will I change.  
Full well I know that now the royal bride  
Wears on her head the magic diadem,  
And in the variegated robe expires :  
But, hurried on by fate, I tread a path  
Of utter wretchedness, and them will plunge  
Into one yet more wretched. To my sons  
Fain would I say : "O stretch forth your right hands  
Ye children, for your mother to embrace.  
O dearest hands, ye lips to me most dear,  
Engaging features and ingenuous looks,  
May ye be blest, but in another world ;  
For by the treacherous conduct of your sire  
Are ye bereft of all this earth bestowed.  
Farewell, sweet kisses—tender limbs, farewell !  
And fragrant breath ! I never more can bear  
To look on you, my children." My afflictions  
Have conquered me ; I now am well aware  
What crimes I venture on : but rage, the cause  
Of woes most grievous to the human race,  
Over my better reason hath prevailed.

*Chorus.* In subtle questions I full many a time  
Have heretofore engaged, and this great point  
Debated, whether woman should extend  
Her search into abstruse and hidden truths.  
But we too have a Muse, who with our sex  
Associates to expound the mystic lore  
Of wisdom, though she dwell not with us all.  
Yet haply a small number may be found,  
Among the multitude of females, dear  
To the celestial Muses. I maintain,  
They who in total inexperience live,  
Nor ever have been parents, are more happy  
Than they to whom much progeny belongs.  
Because the childless, having never tried  
Whether more pain or pleasure from their offspring  
To mortals rises, 'scape unnumbered toils.



But I observe that they, whose fruitful house  
 Is with a lovely race of infants filled,  
 Are harassed with perpetual cares ; how first  
 To train them up in virtue, and whence leave  
 Fit portions for their sons ; but on the good  
 Or worthless, whether they these toils bestow  
 Remains involved in doubt. I yet must name  
 One evil the most grievous, to which all  
 The human race is subject ; some there are  
 Who for their sons have gained sufficient wealth,  
 Seen them to full maturity advance,  
 And decked with every virtue, when, by fate  
 If thus it be ordained, comes death unseen  
 And hurries them to Pluto's gloomy realm.  
 Can it be any profit to the gods  
 To heap the loss of children, that one ill  
 Than all the rest more bitter, on mankind ?

*Medea.* My friends, with anxious expectation long  
 Here have I waited, from within to learn  
 How fortune will dispose the dread event.  
 But one of Jason's servants I behold  
 With breathless speed advancing : his looks show  
 That he some recent mischief would relate.

MESSENGER, MEDEA, CHORUS.

*Messenger.* O thou, who impiously hast wrought a deed  
 Of horror, fly, Medea, from this land,  
 Fly with such haste as not to leave the bark  
 Or from the car alight.

*Medea.* What crime, to merit  
 A banishment like this, have I committed ?

*Messenger.* By thy enchantments is the royal maid  
 This instant dead, and Creon, too, her sire.

*Medea.* Most glorious are the tidings you relate :  
 Henceforth shall you be numbered with my friends  
 And benefactors.

*Messenger.* Ha ! what words are these ?  
 Dost thou preserve thy senses yet entire ?  
 O woman, hath not madness fired thy brain ?  
 The wrongs thou to the royal house hast done  
 Hear'st thou with ioy, nor shudder'st at the tale ?

*Medea.* Somewhat I have in answer to your speech :

But be not too precipitate, my friend ;  
Inform me how they died, for twofold joy  
Wilt thou afford, if wretchedly they perished.

*Messenger.* When with their father thy two sons arrived  
And went into the mansion of the bride,  
We servants, who had shared thy griefs, rejoiced ;  
For a loud rumour instantly prevailed  
That all past strife betwixt thy lord and thee  
Was reconciled. Some kissed the children's hands,  
And some their auburn tresses. I with joy  
To those apartments where the women dwell  
Attended them. Our mistress, the new object  
Of homage such as erst to thee was paid,  
Ere she beheld thy sons on Jason cast  
A look of fond desire : but then she veiled  
Her eyes, and turned her pallid cheeks away  
Disgusted at their coming, till his voice  
Appeased her anger with these gentle words :  
" O be not thou inveterate 'gainst thy friends,  
But lay aside disdain, thy beauteous face  
Turn hither, and let amity for those  
Thy husband loves still warm that generous breast.  
Accept these gifts, and to thy father sue,  
That, for my sake, the exile of my sons  
He will remit." Soon as the princess saw  
Thy glittering ornaments, she could resist  
No longer, but to all her lord's requests  
Assented, and before thy sons were gone  
Far from the regal mansion with their sire,  
The vest, resplendent with a thousand dyes,  
Put on, and o'er her loosely floating hair  
Placing the golden crown, before the mirror  
Her tresses braided, and with smiles surveyed  
Th' inanimated semblance of her charms :  
Then rising from her seat across the palace  
Walked with a delicate and graceful step,  
In the rich gifts exulting, and oft turned  
Enraptured eyes on her own stately neck,  
Reflected to her view : but now a scene  
Of horror followed ; her complexion changed,  
And she reeled backward, trembling every limb ;

Scarce did her chair receive her as she sunk  
In time to save her falling to the ground.  
One of her menial train, an aged dame,  
Possess with an idea that the wrath  
Either of Pan or of some god unknown  
Her mistress had invaded, in shrill tone  
Poured forth a vow to Heaven, till from her mouth  
She saw foam issue, in their sockets roll  
Her wildly glaring eyeballs, and the blood  
Leave her whole frame ; a shriek, that differed far  
From her first plaints, then gave she. In an instant  
This to her father's house, and that to tell  
The bridegroom the mischance which had befallen  
His consort, rushed impetuous ; through the dome  
The frequent steps of those who to and fro  
Ran in confusion did resound. But soon  
As the fleet courser at the goal arrives,  
She who was silent, and had closed her eyes,  
Roused from her swoon, and burst forth into groans  
Most dreadful, for 'gainst her two evils warred :  
Placed on her head the golden crown poured forth  
A wondrous torrent of devouring flames,  
And the embroidered robes, thy children's gifts,  
Preyed on the hapless virgin's tender flesh ;  
Covered with fire she started from her seat  
Shaking her hair, and from her head the crown  
With violence attempting to remove,  
But still more firmly did the heated gold  
Adhere, and the fanned blaze with double lustre  
Burst forth as she her streaming tresses shook :  
Subdued by fate, at length she to the ground  
Fell prostrate : scarce could anyone have known her  
Except her father ; for those radiant eyes  
Dropped from their sockets, that majestic face  
Its wonted features lost, and blood with fire  
Ran down her head in intermingled streams,  
While from her bones the flesh, like weeping pitch,  
Melted away, through the consuming power  
Of those unseen enchantments ; 'twas a sight  
Most horrible : all feared to touch the corpse,  
For her disastrous end had taught us caution.  
Meanwhile her hapless sire, who knew not aught

*Chorus.* Heaven its collected store of evil seems  
This day resolved with justice to pour down  
On perjured Jason. Thy untimely fate  
How do we pity, O thou wretched daughter  
Of Creon, who in Pluto's mansions go'st  
To celebrate thy nuptial feast.

*Medea.* My friends,  
I am resolved, as soon as I have slain  
My children, from these regions to depart,

Nor through inglorious sloth will I abandon  
 My sons to perish by detested hands ;  
 They certainly must die : since then they must ;  
 I bore and I will slay them. O my heart !  
 Be armed with tenfold firmness. What avails it  
 To loiter, when inevitable ills  
 Remain to be accomplished ? Take the sword,  
 And, O my hand, on to the goal that ends  
 Their life, nor let one intervening thought  
 Of pity or maternal tenderness  
 Suspend thy purpose : for this one short day  
 Forget how fondly thou didst love thy sons,  
 How bring them forth, and after that lament  
 Their cruel fate : although thou art resolved  
 To slay, yet hast thou ever held them dear.  
 But I am of all women the most wretched.

[*Exit* MEDEA.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Earth, and thou sun, whose fervid blaze  
 From pole to pole illumines each distant land,  
 View this abandoned woman, ere she raise  
 Against her children's lives a ruthless hand ;  
 For from thy race, divinely bright,  
 They spring, and should the sons of gods be slain  
 By man, 'twere dreadful. O restrain  
 Her fury, thou celestial source of light,  
 Ere she with blood pollute your regal dome,  
 Chased by the demons hence let this Erinny's roam.

II.

The pregnant matron's throes in vain  
 Hast thou endured, and borne a lovely race,  
 O thou, who o'er th' inhospitable main,  
 Where the Cyanean rocks scarce leave a space,  
 Thy daring voyage didst pursue.  
 Why, O thou wretch, thy soul doth anger rend,  
 Such as in murder soon must end ?  
 They who with kindred gore are stained shall rue  
 Their guilt inexpressible : full well I know  
 The gods will on this house inflict severest woe.

# Medea

III

*1st Son [within].* Ah me! what can I do, or whither fly  
To 'scape a mother's arm?

*2nd Son [within].* I cannot tell:  
For, O my dearest brother, we are lost.

*Chorus.* Heard you the children's shrieks? I (O thou dame,  
Whom woes and evil fortune still attend)  
Will rush into the regal dome, from death  
Resolved to snatch thy sons.

*1st Son [within].* We by the gods  
Conjure you to protect us in this hour  
Of utmost peril, for the treacherous snare  
Hath caught us, and we perish by the sword.

*Chorus.* Art thou a rock, O wretch, or steel, to slay  
With thine own hand that generous race of sons  
Whom thou didst bear? I hitherto have heard  
But of one woman, who in ancient days  
Smote her dear children, Ino, by the gods  
With frenzy stung, when Jove's malignant queen  
Distracted from her mansion drove her forth.  
But she, yet reeking with the impious gore  
Of her own progeny, into the waves  
Plunged headlong from the ocean's craggy beach,  
And shared with her two sons one common fate.  
Can there be deeds more horrible than these  
Left for succeeding ages to produce?  
Disastrous union with the female sex,  
How great a source of woes art thou to man!

JASON, CHORUS.

*Jason.* Ye dames who near the portals stand, is she  
Who hath committed these atrocious crimes,  
Medea, in the palace, or by flight  
Hath she retreated? For beneath the ground  
Must she conceal herself, or, borne on wings,  
Ascend the heights of Ether, to avoid  
The vengeance due for Corinth's royal house.  
Having destroyed the rulers of the land,  
Can she presume she shall escape unhurt  
From these abodes? But less am I concerned  
On her account, than for my sons; since they  
Whom she hath injured will on her inflict  
Due punishment: but hither am I come

To save my children's lives, lest on their heads  
The noble Creon's kindred should retaliate  
That impious murder by their mother wrought.

*Chorus.* Thou know'st not yet, O thou unhappy man,  
What ills thou art involved in, or these words  
Had not escaped thee.

*Jason.* Ha, what ills are these  
Thou speak'st of? Would she also murder me?

*Chorus.* By their own mother's hand thy sons are slain.

*Jason.* What can you mean? How utterly, O woman,  
Have you undone me!

*Chorus.* Be assured thy children  
Are now no more.

*Jason.* Where was it, or within  
Those mansions or without, that she destroyed  
Our progeny?

*Chorus.* As soon as thou these doors  
Hast oped, their weltering corpses wilt thou view.

*Jason.* Loose the firm bars and bolts of yonder gates  
With speed, ye servants, that I may behold  
This scene of twofold misery, the remains  
Of the deceased, and punish her who slew them.

*MEDEA, in a chariot drawn by dragons, JASON, CHORUS.*

*Medea.* With levers wherefore dost thou shake those doors  
In quest of them who are no more, and me  
Who dared to perpetrate the bloody deed?  
Desist from such unprofitable toil:  
But if there yet be aught that thou with me  
Canst want, speak freely whatsoe'er thou wilt:  
For with that hand me never shalt thou reach,  
Such steeds the sun my grandsire gives to whirl  
This chariot and protect me from my foes.

*Jason.* O most abandoned woman, by the gods,  
By me and all the human race abhorred,  
Who with the sword could pierce the sons you bore,  
And ruin me, a childless wretched man,  
Yet after you this impious deed have dared  
To perpetrate, still view the radiant sun  
And fostering earth; may vengeance overtake you!  
For I that reason have regained which erst  
Forsook me, when to the abodes of Greece

I from your home, from a barbarian realm,  
 Conveyed you, to your sire a grievous bane,  
 And the corrupt betrayer of that land  
 Which nurtured you. Some envious god first roused  
 Your evil genius from the shades of hell  
 For my undoing : after you had slain  
 Your brother at the altar, you embarked  
 In the famed Argo. Deeds like these a life  
 Of guilt commenced ; with me in wedlock joined,  
 You bore those sons, whom you have now destroyed  
 Because I left your bed. No Grecian dame  
 Would e'er have ventured on a deed so impious ;  
 Yet I to them preferred you for my bride :  
 This was a hostile union, and to me  
 The most destructive ; for my arms received  
 No woman, but a lioness more fell  
 Than Tuscan Scylla. Vainly should I strive  
 To wound you with reproaches numberless,  
 For you are grown insensible of shame !  
 Vile sorceress, and polluted with the blood  
 Of your own children, perish—my hard fate  
 While I lament, for I shall ne'er enjoy  
 My lovely bride, nor with those sons, who owe  
 To me their birth and nurture, ever hold  
 Sweet converse. They, alas ! can live no more,  
 Utterly lost to their desponding sire.

*Medea.* Much could I say in answer to this charge,  
 Were not the benefits from me received,  
 And thy abhorred ingratitude, well known  
 To Jove, dread sire. Yet was it not ordained,  
 Scorning my bed, that thou shouldst lead a life  
 Of fond delight, and ridicule my griefs ;  
 Nor that the royal virgin thou didst wed,  
 Or Creon, who to thee his daughter gave,  
 Should drive me from these regions unavenged.  
 A lioness then call me if thou wilt,  
 Or by the name of Scylla, whose abode  
 Was in Etrurian caverns. For thy heart,  
 As justice prompted, in my turn I wounded.

*Jason.* You grieve, and are the partner of my woes.

*Medea.* Be well assured I am : but what assuages  
 My grief is this, that thou no more canst scoff.



*Jason.* How vile a mother, O my sons, was yours !

*Medea.* How did ye perish through your father's lust !

*Jason.* But my right hand was guiltless of their death.

*Medea.* Not so thy cruel taunts, and that new marriage.

*Jason.* Was my new marriage a sufficient cause  
For thee to murder them ?

*Medea.* Canst thou suppose  
Such wrongs sit light upon the female breast ?

*Jason.* On a chaste woman's ; but your soul abounds  
With wickedness.

*Medea.* Thy sons are now no more,  
This will afflict thee.

*Jason.* O'er your head, alas !  
They now two evil geniuses impend.

*Medea.* The gods know who these ruthless deeds began.

*Jason.* They know the hateful temper of your soul.

*Medea.* In detestation thee I hold, and loathe  
Thy conversation.

*Jason.* Yours too I abhor ;  
But we with ease may settle on what terms  
To part for ever.

*Medea.* Name those terms. Say how  
Shall I proceed ? For such my ardent wish.

*Jason.* Let me inter the dead, and o'er them weep.

*Medea.* Thou shalt not. For their corse with this  
hand

Am I resolved to bury in the grove  
Sacred to awful Juno, who protects  
The citadel of Corinth, lest their foes  
Insult them, and with impious rage pluck up  
The monumental stone. I in this realm  
Of Sisyphus moreover will ordain  
A solemn festival and mystic rites,  
To make a due atonement for my guilt  
In having slain them. To Erectheus' land  
I now am on my road, where I shall dwell  
With Ægeus, great Pandion's son ; but thou  
Shalt vilely perish as thy crimes deserve,  
Beneath the shattered relics of thy bark,  
The Argo, crushed ; such is the bitter end  
Of our espousals and thy faith betrayed.

*Jason.* May the Erinnyes of our slaughtered sons,

And justice, who requites each 'murderous deed,  
Destroy you utterly!

*Medea.* Will any god  
Or demon hear thy curses, O thou wretch,  
False to thy oath, and to the sacred laws  
Of hospitality?

*Jason.* Most impious woman,  
Those hands yet reeking with your children's gore—

*Medea.* Go to the palace, and inter thy bride.

*Jason.* Bereft of both my sons, I thither go.

*Medea.* Not yet enough lament'st thou : to increase  
Thy sorrows, mayst thou live till thou art old!

*Jason.* Ye dearest children.

*Medea.* To their mother dear,  
But not to thee.

*Jason.* Yet them have you destroyed.

*Medea.* That I might punish thee.

*Jason.* One more fond kiss  
On their loved lips, ah me! would I imprint.

*Medea.* Now wouldst thou speak to them, and in thine arms  
Clasp those whom living thou didst banish hence.

*Jason.* Allow me, I conjure you by the gods,  
My children's tender bodies to embrace.

*Medea.* Thou shalt not : these presumptuous words in vain  
By thee were hazarded.

*Jason.* Jove, hear'st thou this,  
How I with scorn am driven away, how wronged  
By that detested lioness, whose fangs  
Have slain her children? Yet shall my loud complaints,  
While here I fix my seat, if 'tis allowed,  
And this be possible, call down the gods  
To witness that you hinder me from touching  
My murdered sons, and paying the deceased  
Funereal honours. Would to Heaven I ne'er  
Had seen them born to perish by your hand!

*Chorus.* Throned on Olympus, with his sovereign nod,  
Jove unexpectedly performs the schemes  
Divine foreknowledge planned; our firmest hopes  
Oft fail us : but the god still finds the means  
Of compassing what man could ne'er have looked for;  
And thus doth this important business end.

# HIPPOLYTUS

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

VENUS.

HIPPOLYTUS.

ATTENDANTS OF HIPPOLYTUS.

OFFICER BELONGING TO THE

PALACE.

CHORUS OF TRÆZENIAN DAMES.

NURSE.

PHÆDRA.

THESEUS.

MESSENGERS.

DIANA.

*Scene.*—BEFORE PITTHEUS' PALACE AT TRÆZENE.

VENUS.

My empire man confesses, and the name  
Of Venus echoes through heaven's wide expanse.  
Among all those who on the distant coast  
Of ocean dwell, and earth's remotest bounds  
Old Atlas' station who upholds the skies,  
Beholding the resplendent solar beams ;  
On them who to my power due homage pay  
Great honours I bestow, and to the dust  
Humble each proud contemner. E'en the race  
Of happy deities with pleasure view  
The reverence mortals yield them. Of these words  
Ere long will I display the truth : that son  
Of Theseus and the Amazonian dame,  
Hippolytus, by holy Pittheus taught,  
E'en he alone among all those who dwell  
Here in Træzene, of th' immortal powers  
Styles me the weakest, loathes the genial bed,  
Nor to the sacred nuptial yoke will bow :  
Apollo's sister, Dian, sprung from Jove,  
He worships, her the greatest he esteems  
Of all the gods, and ever in her groves  
A favoured comrade of the virgin dwells,  
With his swift hounds the flying beasts of prey  
Expelling from their haunts, and aims at more  
Than human nature reaches. Him in this  
I envy not : why should I ? Yet shall vengeance  
This day o'ertake the miscreant : I have forged  
Each implement already, and there needs  
But little labour to effect his doom.  
For erst, on his arrival from the house

Of Pittheus, in Pandion's land, to view  
The mystic rites, and in those mystic rites  
To be initiated, his father's wife,  
Illustrious Phædra, saw the prince, her heart  
At my behest love's dire contagion seized :  
And ere she came to this Trœzenian coast,  
She, where Minerva's rock o'erlooks this land,  
To Venus reared a temple, for the youth  
Who in a foreign region dwelt, engrossed  
By amorous frenzy, and to future times  
Resolved this lasting monumental pile  
Of her unhappy passion to bequeath.  
But from Cecropia's realm since Theseus fled  
To expiate his pollution, with the blood  
Of Pallas' sons distained, and with his queen  
Sailed for this coast, to voluntary exile  
Submitting for one year, the wretched Phædra,  
Groaning and deeply smitten by the stings  
Of love, hath pined in silence, nor perceives  
One of her menial train whence this disease  
Invaded her. Yet of its full effect  
Must not her amorous malady thus fail :  
For I to Theseus am resolved to show  
The truth, no longer shall it rest concealed :  
Then will the father with his curses slay  
My youthful foe : for the reward on Theseus  
Conferred by Neptune, ruler of the waves,  
Was this : that thrice he to that god might sue  
For any gift, nor should he sue in vain.  
Phædra is noble, yet she too shall perish,  
For I of such importance shall not hold  
Her ruin as to spare those foes, on whom  
I the severest vengeance will inflict,  
That I may reassert my injured fame.  
But hence must I retreat : for I behold  
Hippolytus, this son of Theseus, comes,  
Returning from the labours of the chase :  
A numerous band of servants, on their prince  
Attending, in the clamorous song unite  
To celebrate Diana : for he knows not  
That hell hath oped its gates, and he is doomed  
After this day to view the sun no more. [*Exit VENUS.*]

## HIPPOLYTUS, ATTENDANTS.

*Hippolytus.* Come on, my friends, attune your lays  
To resound Diana's praise,  
From the radiant fields of air  
She listens to her votaries' prayer.

*Attend.* Awful queen enthroned above,  
Hail thou progeny of Jove,  
Virgin goddess, whom of yore  
Latona to the Thunderer bore,  
Thy matchless beauties far outshine  
Each of those lovely maids divine,  
Who fill with their harmonious choir  
The domes of Heaven's immortal sire.  
Hail, O thou whose charms excel  
All nymphs that on Olympus dwell.

*Hippolytus.* To deck thee, I this wreath, O goddess, bear,  
Cropt from yon mead, o'er which no swain his flock  
For pasture drives, nor hath the mower's steel  
Despoiled its virgin herbage; 'midst each flower,  
Which spring profusely scatters, there the bee  
Roams unmolested, and religious awe  
Waters the champaign with abundant springs:  
They who owe nought to learning, but have gained  
From nature wisdom such as never fails  
In their whole conduct, are by Heaven allowed  
To cull these sweets, not so the wretch profane.  
Vouchsafe, O dearest goddess, to receive  
This braided fillet for thy golden hair,  
From me a pious votary, who alone  
Of all mankind am for thy worship meet,  
For I with thee reside, with the converse,  
Hearing thy voice indeed, though I thy face  
Have never seen. My life as it began  
May I with spotless purity conclude!

## OFFICER, HIPPOLYTUS.

*Officer.* My royal master (for the gods alone  
Challenge the name of lord), will you receive  
A servant's good advice?

*Hippolytus.* With joy; else void  
Of wisdom I to thee might justly seem.

*Officer.* Know you the law prescribed to man ?

*Hippolytus.*

The law !

I cannot guess the purport of thy question.

*Officer.* To loathe that pride which studies not to please.

*Hippolytus.* Right : for what haughty man is not abhorred ?

*Officer.* Doth then an affable demeanour tend

To make us popular ?

*Hippolytus.*

This much avails,

And teaches us with ease to gain renown.

*Officer.* But think'st thou that among celestial powers

It bears an equal influence ?

*Hippolytus.*

Since the laws

By which we mortals act from Heaven derive

Their origin.

*Officer.*

Why, then, an awful goddess

Neglect you to invoke ?

*Hippolytus.*

Whom ? Yet beware,

Lest thy tongue utter some imprudent word.

*Officer.* This Venus who is stationed o'er your gate.

*Hippolytus.* Still chaste I at a distance her salute.

*Officer.* By mortals deemed illustrious she exacts

Your worship.

*Hippolytus.*

We select this god, that friend,

As suits our various tempers.

*Officer.*

Were you wise,

Wise as you ought, you might be truly happy.

*Hippolytus.* I am not pleased with any god whose rites

Demand nocturnal secrecy.

*Officer.*

My son,

We ought to reverence the immortal powers.

*Hippolytus.* Entering the palace, O my friends, prepare

The viands, after a fatiguing chase

Delicious is the banquet : tend my steeds,

That, when I have refreshed myself with food,

Them I with more convenience to the car

May yoke and exercise : but as for this

Thy Cyprian queen, to her I bid adieu.

[*Exeunt HIPPOLYTUS and ATTENDANTS.*]

*Officer.* Meantime (for the example of young men

Must not be imitated), prompt to think,

And hold such language as a servant ought,

Before thy image I devoutly bend,

O sovereign Venus, thee doth it behove  
 To pardon the rash boy who, flushed with pride,  
 Speaks foolishly : seem thou as if his words  
 Had never reached thine ear : for sure the gods  
 In wisdom should transcend man's grovelling race.  
 [Exit OFFICER.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

A rock supplies, as we are told,  
 In such abundance the exhaustless rill,  
 That oft the virgins 'gainst its basis hold  
 Their copious urns to fill.  
 One of our associate train  
 Thither, in the limpid wave,  
 Went, her purple vests to lave,  
 Then hung them dripping on a cliff, to drain  
 And imbibe the sunny gale :  
 I from her first caught this tale :

I. 2.

That with sickness faint, alone,  
 In yonder palace on her sleepless bed  
 Our queen reclines, she a thin veil hath thrown  
 Over her beauteous head :  
 This the third revolving day,  
 Since, o'erpowered by lingering pains,  
 She from all nourishment abstains,  
 Wasting that lovely frame with slow decay ;  
 She thus her hidden griefs would end,  
 Thus to the silent grave descend.

II. I.

From some god this impulse springs ;  
 Sure Pan or Hecaté have fired thy brain,  
 Or awful Cybelé to vex thee brings  
 Her priests, a frantic train ;  
 Perhaps, exulting in the chase,  
 Thee Dictynna doth pursue,  
 For neglecting homage due  
 Her altar with the promised cates to grace,  
 She swiftly glides o'er mountain steep,  
 Fords the lake or billowy deep.

## II. 2

Have another's witching charms  
Seduced the monarch to a stol'n embrace ;  
Doth then a harlot in thy Theseus' arms  
The nuptial couch disgrace ?  
Or from Cretan shores I ween  
Some sailor crossed the billowy main,  
Reached this hospitable plain,  
And bore a doleful message to the queen :  
Hence with deepest anguish pained  
In her bed is she detained.

## III

Some hidden grief with pregnant throes combined  
Oft dwells upon the female mind,  
Erst in my entrails raged this hidden smart :  
Diana, that celestial maid,  
Amid the pangs of childbirth wont to aid,  
I then invoked, and she, whose dart  
Pierces the hind, with tutelary care  
Descended at her votary's prayer,  
And with her brought each friendly power  
Who guards our sex in that distressful hour.

But lo ! her aged nurse before the gates  
Leads out the queen, over whose downcast brow  
Care spreads a deeper cloud : my inmost soul  
Burns with impatience to explore the grief  
Which prays in secret on her fading charms.

PHÆDRA, NURSE, CHORUS.

*Nurse.* Ye wretched mortals, who by loathed disease  
Are visited ! What shall I do to aid thee,  
Or what shall I omit ? The solar beams  
Here mayst thou view, here find a cooling air.  
For we without the palace doors have borne  
The couch where sickening thou reclin'st. Thy talk  
Was all of coming hither : but in haste  
Back to thy chamber soon wilt thou return :  
For thou, each moment altering, tak'st delight  
In nothing long ; the present quickly grows  
Unpleasing, somewhat absent thou esteem'st



More grateful. Better were it to be sick  
 Than tend the lingering patient, for the first  
 Is but a simple ill, the last unites  
 The mind's more pungent griefs and manual toil.  
 But the whole life of man abounds with woe,  
 Our labours never cease ; yet sure there is,  
 There is a blest futurity, concealed  
 Behind thick night's impenetrable veil.

- We therefore seem mistaken, when we dote  
 On yonder sun, that o'er this nether earth  
 Displays its glittering beams, because we know  
 No other life, nor have the realms beneath  
 Been e'er laid open : but by tales, devised  
 To cheat, at random are we borne away.

*Phædra.* Lift up my body, prop my sinking head,  
 Each limb, my friends, has lost its strength ; sustain,  
 O ye who on your wretched mistress tend,  
 My hands, which hang quite motionless : away  
 With cumbrous ornaments, the caul remove,  
 And let these tresses o'er my shoulders flow.

*Nurse.* Daughter, be cheerful, and compose to rest  
 Thy languid frame : thou, if with patience armed  
 And generous fortitude of soul, wilt bear  
 Thy sickness better. For mankind are doomed  
 By fate to struggle with a load of ills.

*Phædra.* How shall I drink at yonder limpid fount  
 The cooling waters, and 'midst grassy vales  
 Recline my wearied limbs beneath the shade  
 Of spreading alders ?

*Nurse.* What confused discourse  
 Escapes thee ? Utter not before the crowd  
 Such words as closely border on distraction.

*Phædra.* Lead to yon mount ; I tread the piny grove,  
 Where the staunch hounds along the mazy track  
 Follow their prey, and, lightly bounding, seize  
 The dappled stag. Ye gods, with my shrill voice  
 What joy to rouse them, while my auburn hair  
 Floats in the wanton gale, and brandish round  
 In my firm hand Thessalia's pointed lance.

*Nurse.* Whence, O my child, proceed these anxious cares ?  
 What business with the chase hast thou ? Why  
 thirst

For the pure fountain, while a constant spring,  
Whose waters thou mayst drink, flows hard beside  
The citadel?

*Phædra.* Dread Artemis, thou goddess  
Presiding o'er yon sacred lake, who aid'st  
The fleet-hoofed racer, bear me o'er thy fields  
To tame Hennesia's coursers.

*Nurse.* Why repeat  
These incoherent words? But now to climb  
The mountain's lofty summit was thy wish  
That thou might'st hunt, then on the sandy beach  
To drive thy steeds. O for an abler seer  
Who can expound what god with iron curb  
Subdues my daughter and perverts thy soul.

*Phædra.* Ah, what have I been doing? Wretched me!  
From my right senses whither have I wandered?  
Into this frenzy I, alas! am plunged  
By some malignant demon. Yet once more  
Cover my head. The words which I have spoken  
Fill me with conscious shame, and many a tear  
Streams down my cheeks; I feel the rising blush,  
And know not where to turn these eyes. The pang,  
When reason reassumes her throne, is great.  
Though madness be an evil: yet 'tis best  
When in that state unconscious we expire.

*Nurse.* Thee thus I cover: but ah, when will death  
Cover my body? A long life hath taught me  
Full many a useful lesson. Friendships formed  
With moderation for the human race  
Are most expedient, and not such as pierce  
The marrow of their souls: with the same ease  
As they the sacred chords entwine they ought  
To slacken them at will. But for one heart  
To suffer twofold anguish, as I grieve  
For my unhappy mistress, is a load  
Beyond endurance. 'Tis remarked, there springs  
From all sensations too intense, more pain  
Than pleasure, and our health they oft impair.  
A foe to all excess, I rather praise  
This sentence, "Not too much of anything;"  
And in my judgment will the wise concur.

*Chorus.* Thou aged dame, who hast with steadfast zeal

Attended royal Phædra, we observe  
What agonies she suffers, but discern not  
The nature of her malady ; and wish  
By thee to be instructed whence it springs.

*Nurse.* I know not ; for no answer will she give  
To my inquiries.

*Chorus.* Nor the source whence rise  
Her sufferings ?

*Nurse.* Your account and mine agree :  
For she on all these points remains still dumb.

*Chorus.* How faint and wasted seems that graceful form !

*Nurse.* No wonder : since she tasted any food  
This day's the third.

*Chorus.* By Ate's wrath o'ercome,  
Or does she strive to die ?

*Nurse.* To die she strives,  
And by such abstinence her life would end.

*Chorus.* Strange is thy tale : this cannot please her lord.

*Nurse.* From him she hides her sickness, and pretends  
To be in health.

*Chorus.* If in her face he look,  
Can he not read it ?

*Nurse.* To a foreign land  
From hence, alas ! he went, nor yet returns.

*Chorus.* Why art thou not more urgent to explore  
This malady, these wanderings of her soul ?

*Nurse.* Without effect all methods have I tried :  
Yet with the self-same zeal will I persist,  
That ye may testify the strong attachment  
Which I to my unhappy queen have borne.  
O my loved daughter, let us both forget  
What we have said : be thou more mild, that gloom  
Which overcasts thy brow, those harsh resolves,  
Lay thou aside, and if to thee erewhile  
I spoke amiss, in milder accents now  
Will I express myself ; if under pains  
Thou labour, such as may not be revealed,  
To succour thee thy female friends are here.  
But if the other sex may know thy sufferings,  
Let the physician try his healing art.  
In either case, why silent ? It behoves thee,  
O daughter, to reply ; and, if I speak

Unwittingly, reprove me, if aright,  
 With wholesome admonition, O concur.  
 Say somewhat : cast one look this way. Ah me !  
 But listen to this truth, though more perverse  
 Than ocean's waves : thy children, if thou die,  
 Will be deserted, and can have no share  
 In the paternal house : for his first queen,  
 That martial Amazonian dame, hath borne  
 Their sire a son to lord it o'er thy race,  
 Though illegitimate, with liberal views  
 Trained up from infancy, him well thou know'st,  
 Hippolytus.

*Phædra.* Ah me !

*Nurse.* Doth then that name

Affect thee ?

*Phædra.* You have ruined me ; peace, peace :  
 Be silent, I conjure you by the gods,  
 Speak of that man no more.

*Nurse.* With open eyes,  
 And senses now restored, canst thou neglect  
 Thy children's interest, nor preserve thy life ?

*Phædra.* I love my children : but another storm  
 Assails me.

*Nurse.* O my daughter, sure thy hands  
 Are undefiled with blood ?

*Phædra.* My hands are pure,  
 Yet doth pollution harbour in my soul.

*Nurse.* Proceeds this mischief from some foe ?

*Phædra.* A friend—  
 An unconsenting friend, alas !—destroys me,  
 Nor do I perish through my own consent.

*Nurse.* Hath Theseus wronged thee ?

*Phædra.* May I ne'er be found  
 To have injured him !

*Nurse.* Then what important cause  
 Precipitates thy death ?

*Phædra.* Indulge my error ;  
 For I 'gainst you offend not.

*Nurse.* My assent  
 To such request would be a breach of duty.

*Phædra.* What mean you by this violence ? Why hang  
 Upon my hand ?

*Nurse.* In suppliant posture thus,  
Thus to thy knees for ever will I cling.

*Phædra.* If you, unhappy woman, heard my woes,  
You would partake them.

*Nurse.* What severer woe  
Can possibly befall me than the loss  
Of thee, my honoured mistress? For I see  
Thou art resolved to perish.

*Phædra.* This affair  
To me will bring renown.

*Nurse.* Why then conceal  
Those merits into which I wish t' inquire?

*Phædra.* Me virtuous motives prompt to deeds of shame.

*Nurse.* Reveal those motives, hence shalt thou appear  
More noble.

*Phædra.* O depart, I by the gods  
Conjure you, and release my hand.

*Nurse.* Not thus,  
If this request from me thou still withhold.

*Phædra.* I will comply; for you, my aged suppliant,  
Such due respect I entertain.

*Nurse.* In silence  
Will I attend: now is it thine to speak.

*Phædra.* My wretched mother, what a love was thine!

*Nurse.* Why shouldst thou name her passion for that bull?

*Phædra.* And you, my hapless sister, Bacchus' wife—

*Nurse.* What ails thee? Why dost thou recount the shame  
Of these thy kindred?

*Phædra.* But of me the third,  
How wretched is the fate!

*Nurse.* Thou strik'st me dumb.  
Where will this history end?

*Phædra.* Thence spring my woes,  
Woes of no recent date.

*Nurse.* I understand  
As little of the secret I would learn,  
As if thou still wert silent.

*Phædra.* How should you  
Divine my thoughts so as t' anticipate  
What I would speak?

*Nurse.* No prophetess am I,  
These mysteries with precision to unfold.

*Phædra.* Say what is that which men entitle love?

*Nurse.* Love is a mixture formed of sweetest joys  
And torments most severe.

*Phædra.* The last of these  
Have I experienced.

*Nurse.* Daughter, ha, what saidst thou?  
For whom thus burn'st thou with forbidden fires?

*Phædra.* Who is that son of th' Amazonian dame?

*Nurse.* Mean'st thou Hippolytus?

*Phædra.* By you, not me,  
That name was uttered.

*Nurse.* Ah, what words are these?  
How hast thou ruined me! This, O my friends,  
Is not to be endured; I cannot live  
To bear it: to these eyes the lamp of day  
Grows odious; the encumbrance of this body  
Will I cast off, nor on such tenure hold  
A being I abhor. And now farewell  
For ever! Count me dead. Chaste matrons yield  
With some reluctance, yet to lawless love  
At length they yield. Venus is then no goddess,  
But somewhat more than goddess: for my queen  
And me, and this whole house, hath she destroyed.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Too clear thou heard'st the royal dame confess  
The horrors which her bosom stain:  
O had I died ere this severe distress  
Shook reason's seat and fired her frantic brain!  
Thy sorrows are by Heaven decreed.  
Ye miseries on which mortals feed!  
Thy shame lies open to the sun,  
And thou, my royal mistress, art undone.  
Short is thy date:  
What cruel fate,  
Such as with life alone can end,  
Shall to the grave thy steps attend!  
I see, I see through time's deep gloom,  
These mansions fall by Venus' doom:  
Such revolution is at hand,  
Thee, hapless Cretan nymph, the fates demand.

*Phædra.* O ye Troezenian matrons, who reside

On this extremity of the domains

Where Pelops ruled ; through many a wakeful night

Have I considered whence mankind became

Thus universally corrupt, and deem

That to the nature of the human soul

Our frailties are not owing, for to form

Sound judgments is a privilege enjoyed

By many. But the matter in this light

Ought to be viewed ; well knowing what is good,

We practise not. Some do amiss through sloth,

Others to virtue's rigid laws prefer

Their pleasures ; for with various pleasures life

Is furnished ; conversation lengthened out

Beyond due bounds ; ease, that bewitching pest

And shame, of which there are two kinds—one leads

To virtue, by the other is a house

Involved in woe ; but if the proper season

For our expressing shame were ascertained

With due precision, things which bear one name

Could not have differed thus. When in my mind

I had revolved these thoughts, to me it seemed

As if no magic had sufficient power

To warp the steadfast purpose of my soul.

Here I to you the progress of my heart

Will next unfold, since love with his keen shafts

These wounds inflicted ; studious how to bear,

As it became me, this abhorred disease

I from that time have by a wary silence

Concealed the pangs I suffer. For the tongue

Must not be trusted, well can it suggest

To others wholesome counsels when they err,

Though to its owner oft it proves the source

Of grievous ills. I next this amorous rage

With firmness was determined to endure,

And conquer it by chastity. At length,

When all these sage expedients proved too weak

O'er Venus to prevail, my best resource

I thought was death : none hath a right to blame

These counsels. May my virtues be conspicuous ;

But when I act amiss, I would avoid

Too many witnesses. That on such deed,

And e'en the inclination to transgress,  
Disgrace attends, I knew, and was aware  
That if from honour's paths a woman swerve  
She to the world is odious. On her head  
Be tenfold ruin heaped who first presumed  
To introduce adulterers, and defile  
The nuptial couch ; from those of nobler birth  
Begun this evil through our sex to spread.  
For when foul deeds please those who erst have borne  
A virtuous character, to souls depraved  
They recommend themselves beneath a form  
Of seeming excellence. Those too I hate  
Whose words are modest, but their lives impure  
In private. O thou goddess, who didst rise  
From ocean, lovely Venus, how can these  
Without a blush their injured lords behold ?  
Tremble they not, lest their accomplice darkness,  
Or lest the vaulted roofs of their abodes,  
Should send forth an indignant voice ? This robs  
Your queen of life, my friends : so shall the charge  
Of having shamed my lord, my children shamed,  
Be never urged against me : free and blest  
With liberty of speech, in the famed city  
Of Athens, they shall dwell, maternal fame  
Transmitted for their portion. E'en the man  
Of dauntless courage dwindles to a slave  
If conscious that his mother or his sire  
Have acted wickedly. One only good,  
A just and virtuous soul, the wise affirm,  
Strives for pre-eminence with life : for time,  
At length, when like some blooming nymph her charms  
Contemplating, he to our eyes holds up  
His mirror, every guilty wretch displays.  
Among that number may I ne'er be found !

*Chorus.* Wherever we discern it, O how fair  
Is modesty, that source of bright renown !

*Nurse.* O queen, at first, an instantaneous shock,  
I, from the history of thy woes, received :  
Now am I sensible my fears were groundless.  
But frequently the second thoughts of man  
Are more discreet ; for there is nothing strange  
Nought, in thy sufferings, foreign to the course



- Of nature : thee the goddess in her rage  
 Invades. Thou lov'st. And why should this surprise?  
 Many as well as thee have done the same.  
 Art thou resolved to cast thy life away  
 Because thou lov'st? How wretched were the state  
 Of those who love, and shall hereafter love,  
 If death must thence ensue! For though too strong
- To be withstood, when she with all her might  
 Assails us, Venus gently visits those  
 Who yield ; but if she light on one who soars  
 With proud and overweening views too high,  
 As thou mayst well conceive, to utter scorn  
 Such she exposes ; through the boundless tracts  
 Of air she glides, and reigns 'midst ocean's waves :  
 All things from her their origin derive,  
 'Tis she that in each breast the genial seeds  
 Of potent love infuses, and from love  
 Descends each tribe that fills the peopled earth.  
 They who with ancient writings have conversed,  
 And ever dwell among the tuneful Nine,  
 Know how to Theban Semele's embrace  
 Flew amorous Jove, how bright Aurora stole  
 Young Cephalus, and placed among the gods  
 The object of her passion : yet in Heaven  
 They still reside, where unabashed they meet  
 Their kindred gods ; those gods, because they feel  
 A sympathetic wound, I deem, indulge  
 Their weakness : and wilt thou refuse to bear  
 Like imperfections? Nature on these terms  
 Decreed thou from thy father shouldst receive  
 Thy being : look for other gods, or yield  
 Submission to these laws. Hast thou observed,  
 How many husbands, men who are endued  
 With a superior wisdom, when they see  
 The nuptial bed by secret lust defiled,  
 Appear as though they saw not : and how oft  
 The fathers, if their sons transgress, connive  
 At their unhappy passion? To conceal  
 Unseemly actions is no trifling part  
 Of human wisdom ; nor should man his life  
 Form with too great precision ; for the roof,  
 The covering from the storm, the builder leaves

Less fair, less highly finished. If immersed  
In evils great as those thou hast described,  
How canst thou hope to 'scape? But if thy virtues,  
Since thou art only human, far exceed  
Thy failings, it is well with thee: desist,  
O my loved daughter, from thy evil purpose,  
And cease to utter these reproachful words:  
For there is nought but contumelious pride  
In thy endeavour to be yet more perfect  
Than the immortal gods: endure thy passion  
With fortitude, since 'twas the will divine  
That thou shouldst love: but give a prosperous turn,  
If possible, to thy disease. For songs  
There are with magic virtues fraught, and words  
Which soothe the soul: hence an effectual cure  
May be obtained: in such discovery man  
Would long in vain be busied, to our sex  
If no spontaneous stratagem occur.

*Chorus.* Though her advice, amid thy present woes,  
O Phædra, be more useful, I applaud  
Thy better purpose: yet applause unsought  
May haply give offence, and to thine ear  
Convey sounds harsher than her specious words.

*Phædra.* 'Tis this, e'en this, too plausible a tongue,  
Which states administered by wholesome laws,  
And houses of the mighty, hath o'erthrown:  
Nor should we utter what delights the ear,  
But for renown a generous thirst instil.

*Nurse.* What means this grave harangue? No need has  
thou

Of well-turned phrases, but the man thou lov'st.  
Look out with speed for those who, in clear terms,  
Will to the prince thy real state unfold.  
But had not such calamities assailed  
Thy life, and thou remained virtuous dame,  
I ne'er, to gratify thy wild desires,  
Would have enticed thee to a lawless bed  
But now this great exertion, to preserve  
Thy life, is such that envy could not blame

*Phædra.* Detested speech! Will you ne'er close that mouth  
And the ungrateful repetition cease  
Of words so infamous?

*Nurse.*

What I proposed,

Though culpable it be, far better suits  
 Thy interests than severer virtue's rules ;  
 For indiscretion, if it save thy life,  
 Hath far more merit than that empty name  
 Thy pride would make thee perish to retain.

*Phædra.* I by the gods conjure you to desist

(For you, in terms too plausible, express  
 Things that are infamous), nor in this strain  
 Attempt to prove that, yielding up my soul  
 To love, I shall act right : for if you paint  
 Foul deeds with specious colours, in the snares  
 From which I now am 'scaping I afresh  
 Shall be entangled.

*Nurse.*

Hadst thou earlier formed

These rigid notions, thou shouldst ne'er have erred.  
 But since this cannot be, my counsel hear :  
 From thee this second favour I request ;  
 I in my house have philtres to assuage  
 The pangs of love (which but just now occurred  
 To my remembrance) ; these, nor to disgrace  
 Exposing thee, nor of such strong effect  
 As to impair thy reason, yet will work  
 On this thy malady a perfect cure,  
 Unless through mere perverseness thou refuse  
 To make th' experiment : for we from him  
 Thou lov'st, must either take a sign, a word,  
 Or fragment of his robe, to join two hearts  
 In mutual love.

*Phædra.*

But is this wondrous medicine

You recommend an ointment or a potion ?

*Nurse.*

I cannot tell. Search for a cure, my child,  
 And not instruction.

*Phædra.*

Greatly do I fear

Your wisdom will be carried to excess.

*Nurse.*

Know then thou art disposed to be alarmed  
 At everything. But whence arise these terrors ?

*Phædra.*

Aught that hath passed, lest you to Theseus' son  
 Should mention.

*Nurse.*

Peace, O daughter, be it mine

To manage this aright : I only sue,  
 Benignant goddess, sprung from ocean's waves,

That thou, O Venus, wouldst my projects aid.  
But to our friends within, will it suffice  
The rest of my intentions to unfold.

• [*Exit* NURSE.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

O love, whose sweet delusions fly,  
Instilling passion through the eye,  
And steal upon the heart,  
Never thus my soul engage,  
Come not with immoderate rage,  
Nor choose thy keenest dart :  
Not the lightning's awful glare,  
Not the thunderbolts of Jove,  
Such destructive terrors bear,  
As strongly vibrate in the shafts of love.

I. 2.

On Alpheus' banks in vain, in vain,  
Or at Apollo's Delphic fane,  
Whole herds of slaughtered kine  
Doth Greece present, if we neglect  
Venus' son, who claims respect,  
The genial couch his shrine :  
With the vengeance of a foe,  
If the deity invades,  
On man he pours forth every woe,  
And crowds with victims all the Stygian shades.

II. I.

By Venus was Cæchalia's maid,  
Of hymeneal bonds afraid,  
Consigned in days of yore,  
Like a wild filly to the yoke,  
Espoused 'midst horrid slaughter, smoke,  
And rites profaned with gore ;  
Indignant was the virgin led,  
Streaming with dishevelled hair,  
To the stern Alcides' bed,  
While bridal shouts were mingled with despair.

## II. 2.

Unite, thou sacred Theban wall,  
And fountain famed from Dirce's fall,

• To witness with what might  
Resistless Cytherea came,  
Brandishing ethereal flame ;

To everlasting night,  
She, beauteous Semele consigned,  
Who to Jove Lyæus bore :

Her breath's a pestilential wind,

Our heads she like the bee still hovers o'er.

*Phædra.* Restrain your tongues : we, O my friends, are ruined.

**Chorus.** O Phædra, say what terrible event

In thy abode hath happened?

*Phædra* Not a word

Must now be uttered : I would hear these sounds  
Which issue from the palace.

*Chorus.* We are silent :

Yet must this prelude sure denote some ill.

*Phædra.* Wretch that I am ! How dreadful are my woes !

*Chorus.* What shrieks, alas! are these—what clamorous sounds

By thee now uttered? Speak, my hapless queen,  
What sudden rumour terrifies thy soul?

*Phædra.* We are undone, but stand ye at these doors  
And listen to the uproar raised within.

*Chorus.* Thou to those portals art already close,  
And in the voice which issues from the palace  
Hast a great interest, therefore say what ill  
Hath happened.

*Phædra.* Stern Hippolytus, the son  
Of that intrepid Amazonian dame,  
In loudest tone full many a horrid curse  
Is uttering 'gainst my servant.

*Chorus.* A mere noise

Is all I hear, yet cannot I collect  
A single word distinctly: passing through  
These doors their sound hath surely reached thine  
ear.

*Phædra.* He plainly calls her harbinger of vice,  
And the betrayer of her sovereign's bed.

*Chorus.* Wretch that I am ! Thou, O my dearest queen,  
Hast been betrayed. What counsel can I give?  
The mystery is laid open ; thou art ruined—  
Utterly ruined.

*Phædra.* Ah !

*Chorus.* Thy friends have proved  
Unfaithful to their trust.

*Phædra.* To her I owe  
My ruin, who, though prompted by her love,  
Unwisely my calamity disclosed,  
Hoping the desperate malady to heal.

*Chorus.* What part, alas ! remains for thee to act,  
Surrounded by inevitable mischiefs ?

*Phædra.* But one expedient for my present ills  
I know : their only cure is instant death.

HIPPOLYTUS, NURSE, PHÆDRA, CHORUS.

*Hippolytus.* Earth, mother of us all, and sun, whose  
beams

Diffuse their splendour wide, what words, unfit  
For any tongue to utter, reached these ears !

*Nurse.* Peace, O my son, lest some one hear thy voice.

*Hippolytus.* I cannot bury such atrocious crimes  
As these in silence.

*Nurse.* By that fair right hand,  
Thee I implore.

*Hippolytus.* Profane not by your touch  
My garment.

*Nurse.* Grovelling at thy knees, I crave  
Thou wouldst not ruin me.

*Hippolytus.* Why wish to check  
My tongue, if you, as you pretend, have said  
Nought that is blamable ?

*Nurse.* Yet must my words  
On no account be published.

*Hippolytus.* To the world  
What's virtuous may with honour be revealed.

*Nurse.* Forget not thus the reverence, O my son,  
Due to a solemn oath.

*Hippolytus.* Although my tongue  
Hath sworn, my soul is from the compact free.

*Nurse.* O thou rash youth, what mean'st thou? Art thou bent

On the destruction of thy friends?

*Hippolytus.* I hold

The friendships of the wicked in abhorrence.

*Nurse.* Forgive me: error is the lot of man.

*Hippolytus.* By a fair semblance to deceive the world,  
Wherefore, O Jove, beneath the solar beams  
That evil, woman, didst thou cause to dwell?  
For if it was thy will the human race  
Should multiply, this ought not by such means  
To be effected: better in thy fane  
Each votary, on presenting brass or steel,  
Or massive ingots of resplendent gold,  
Proportioned to his offering, might from thee  
Obtain a race of sons, and under roofs  
Which genuine freedom visits, unannoyed  
By women, live. But to receive this worst  
Of evils, now no sooner are our doors  
Thrown open than the riches of our house  
We utterly exhaust. How great a pest  
Is woman this one circumstance displays;  
The very father who begot and nurtured,  
A plenteous dower advancing, sends her forth,  
That of such loathed incumbrance he may rid  
His mansions: but the hapless youth, who takes  
This noxious inmate to his bed, exults  
While he caparisons a worthless image,  
In gorgeous ornaments and tissued vests  
Squandering his substance. With some noble  
race  
He who by wedlock a connection forms  
Is bound by hard necessity to keep  
The loathsome consort; if perchance he gain  
One who is virtuous sprung from worthless sires,  
He by the good compensates for the ills  
Attending such a union. Happier he,  
Unvexed by these embarrassments, whose bride  
Inactive through simplicity, and mild,  
To his abode is like a statue fixed.  
All female wisdom doth my soul abhor.  
Never may the aspiring dame, who grasps

At knowing more than to her sex belongs,  
Enter my house : for in the subtle breast  
Are deeper stratagems by Venus sown :  
But she whose reason is too weak to frame  
A plot, from amorous frailties lives secure.  
No female servant ever should attend  
The married dame, she rather ought to dwell  
Among wild beasts, who are by nature mute,  
Lest she should speak to any, or receive  
Their answers. But the wicked now devise  
Mischief in secret chambers, while abroad  
Their confidants promote it : thus, vile wretch,  
In privacy you came, with me to form  
An impious treaty for surrendering up  
My royal father's unpolluted bed.  
Soon from such horrors in the limpid spring  
My ears will I make pure : how could I rush  
Into the crime itself, when, having heard  
Only the name made mention of, I feel  
As though I some defilement thence had caught ?  
Base woman, know 'tis my religion saves  
Your forfeit life, for by a solemn oath  
If to the gods I had not unawares  
Engaged myself, I ne'er would have refrained  
From stating these transactions to my sire ;  
But now, while Theseus in a foreign land  
Continues, hence will I depart, and keep  
The strictest silence. But I soon shall see,  
When with my injured father I return,  
How you and your perfidious queen will dare  
To meet his eyes, then fully shall I know  
Your impudence, of which I now have made  
This first essay. Perdition seize you both :  
For with unsatiated abhorrence, still  
'Gainst woman will I speak, though some object  
To my repeating always the same charge :  
For they are ever uniformly wicked :  
Let any one then prove the female sex  
Possest of chastity, or suffer me,  
As heretofore, against them to inveigh.

[Exit HIPPOLYTUS.]



CHORUS.

*Antistrophe.*

O wretched woman's inauspicious fate !

What arts, what projects can we find,  
To extricate ourselves, ere yet too late,  
From our distress, or how the snare unbind ?

*Phædra.* Just are the sufferings I endure :

Thou earth and sun, my anguish cure.

How, O my friends, shall I avoid

The stroke of fate before I am destroyed ?

Or how conceal

The pangs I feel ?

What tutelary god is near,

What friendly mortal will appear

To aid me in this hour of shame ?

Afflictions and an evil name

The remnant of my life must vex :

I now am the most wretched of my sex.

*Chorus.* Alas ! all now is over ; O my queen,

The stratagems thy hapless servant framed

Fail of success, and desperate are thy fortunes.

*Phædra.* O villanous destroyer of your friends,

How have you ruined me ! May Jove my grandsire

Uproot you in his vengeance from the earth,

And smite with thunderbolts that perjured head.

When I your baleful stratagems foresaw,

How oft did I enjoin you to conceal

That fatal truth, from whose discovery spring

The torments I endure : but you the secret

Contained not, hence with an unspotted fame

I cannot die, but some fresh scheme must forge.

For this rash youth, his soul with anger fired,

Will to his father my offence relate,

Inform the aged Pittheus of my woes,

And with this history, to my foul reproach,

Fill the whole world. May just perdition seize

Both you and all who by dishonest means

Their unconsenting friends are prompt to aid.

*Nurse.* Thou, O my royal mistress, mayst condemn

The fault I have committed : for thy griefs

Are so severe that they awhile o'ercome

Thy better judgment. But wouldst thou admit  
My answer, I could make one : thee I nurtured,  
And in thy happiness an interest feel.  
But searching for a medicine to remove  
Thy sickness, what I least could wish I found  
Success had stamped me wise : for by events  
Are our opinions influenced

*Phædra.* Is it just,  
And satisfactory, thus first to wound,  
And then dispute with me?

*Nurse.* We dwell too long  
On this unhappy subject : I confess  
My folly : but, O daughter, there are means  
To extricate thee still from all thy woes.

*Phædra.* End this harangue ; you counselled me amiss  
At first, and undertook a vile design.  
Go mind your own affairs : be mine the task,  
What interests me, to settle as I ought.

[*Exit NURSE.*]

But, O my noble friends, Troezenian dames,  
Thus far indulgent to my earnest prayer,  
In silence bury what you here have heard.

*Chorus.* I call, Diana, venerable daughter  
Of Jove, to witness I will ne'er reveal  
Aught of thy sorrows.

*Phædra.* Ye have spoken well.  
But after weighing all things in my mind,  
I one expedient have at length devised  
In this calamity, which may secure  
To my loved sons an honourable life,  
And to myself, encompassed by such woes  
As now befall me, some relief afford.  
For I will never scandalize the house  
Of Crete, nor come, after so base a deed,  
Into the presence of offended Theseus,  
To save one single life.

*Chorus.* Art thou then bent  
On mischief such as cannot be recalled?

*Phædra.* To die is my resolve : but by what means  
I must deliberate.

*Chorus.* More auspicious words  
Than these I crave.

*Phædra.*

All I from you expect  
 Is wholesome counsel. For the Cyprian queen,  
 To whom I owe my ruin, I this day  
 Shall gratify, thus yielding up my life,  
 Vanquished by ruthless love. But after death  
 I to another shall become a curse ;  
 Hence shall he learn no longer to exult  
 In my disastrous fortunes, but acquire  
 Discretion, while my anguish he partakes.

[*Exit PHÆDRA.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

To where yon rock o'erhangs the main  
 Waft me, ye gods, thence bid me spring,  
 Transformed into a bird, on vigorous wing  
 Through trackless ether mid the feathered train :  
 With rapid pinions would I soar  
 On high above the Adriatic shore,  
 And Po's impetuous stream,  
 Fixed on whose banks that virgin choir,  
 Who spring from an immortal sire,  
 Intent on the same dolorous theme,  
 Still weep for Phaeton's untimely end,  
 While 'midst the purple tide their amber tears descend.

I. 2.

On to those coasts would I proceed  
 Where the Hesperides their song  
 Attune ; no mariner can thence prolong  
 The voyage, for, his daring bark t' impede,  
 Neptune those hallowed bounds maintains,  
 Where Atlas with unwearied toil sustains  
 The heavens' incumbent load ;  
 And from a never-failing spring  
 Ambrosia's streams their tribute bring,  
 Watering those chambers, Jove's abode :  
 There the glad soil its choicest gifts supplies  
 Obedient to the reign of happy deities.

## II. 1.

Across yon hoarse resounding main,  
 O bark of Crete, those hastier gales,  
 Which caught the snowy canvas of thy sails,  
 Conveyed my mistress, but conveyed in vain ;  
 By fate from prosperous mansions torn,  
 To nuptial rites unhallowed was she borne,  
 And scenes of future shame :  
 For surely from her native land,  
 To the renowned Athenian strand,  
 She with a luckless omen came ;  
 Though, to the shore their twisted cables bound,  
 With joy the sailors leaped on fair Munychia's ground.

## II. 2.

Her strength in lingering sickness spent,  
 Hence is she ordained to prove  
 How great the tortures of unlawful love,  
 By the command of angry Venus sent,  
 And after struggling long in vain,  
 Defeated by intolerable pain,  
 Her snowy neck around,  
 To bind that galling noose, revolves,  
 Which from her bridal roofs devolves,  
 Awed by the heaven-inflicted wound :  
 Choosing to perish thus with glory blest,  
 She, cruel love expels, the soul's tyrannic pest.

## MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Messenger.* Ho ! ho ! All ye who near the palace stand,  
 With speed come hither ; by the fatal cord,  
 Our queen, the wife of Theseus, is destroyed.

*Chorus.* The deed, alas ! is done. My royal mistress  
 Suspended in the noose is now no more.

*Messenger.* Why are ye not more swift ? Will no one bring  
 The sharpened steel, that, with its aid, this instant  
 The bandage we may sever from her neck ?

*1st Semichorus.* What shall we do ? Were it not best, my  
 friends,

To rush into the palace, and our queen  
 Loose from the knot which her own hands have tied ?

*2nd Semichorus.* But why do the young servants, in this hour  
Of woe, absent themselves? To be too busy  
Is never safe.

*Messenger.* Extend the hapless body;  
Unwelcome office to the lords I serve.

[*Exit MESSENGER.*]

*Chorus.* From what I hear, this miserable dame  
Hath left the world: for they are stretching forth  
Her corse as one who is already dead.

#### THESEUS, CHORUS

*Theseus.* O woman, know ye what loud voice is that  
Within the palace? From the menial train  
Of damsels, shrieks most grievous reached my ear.  
None of my household, opening wide the gates,  
Deign to receive me with auspicious words  
On my return from the prophetic shrine.  
Hath aught befall'n the venerable Pittheus?  
What though he be already far advanced  
Into the vale of years, yet would his death  
These mansions with a general sorrow fill.

*Chorus.* Fate in its march, O Theseus, hath not pierced  
The aged: they who in the bloom of youth  
Are now cut off your sorrows will demand.

*Theseus.* Ah me! Hath cruel death then torn away  
One of my sons?

*Chorus.* They live, while breathless lies  
Their mother; and most piteous was her end.

*Theseus.* What saidst thou? Is my dearest Phædra dead?  
Through what mischance?

*Chorus.* She tied the fatal noose.

*Theseus.* Had grief congealed her blood? Or was she urged  
To this by some calamitous event?

*Chorus.* We only know the fact: for to the palace  
Am I just come, O Theseus, that with yours  
My sorrows I may mingle.

*Theseus.* Round these brows  
Why do I wear a garland, but to show  
That I the oracle in luckless hour  
Have visited? Unbar those doors, my servants,  
Open them wide, that I the wretched corse

Of my dear wife may view, who by her death  
Hath ruined me.

[*The palace doors are opened, and the body of PHÆDRA  
is discovered, with a veil thrown over it.*]

*Chorus.* Thy woes, unhappy queen,  
Were dreadful ; yet thou such a deed has wrought  
As in confusion this whole house will plunge :  
Presumptuous, violent, unnatural death  
By thine own hand inflicted : for, ah ! who—  
Who but thyself was author of thy fall ?

*Theseus.* Wretch that I am ! How many and how great  
Are my afflictions ? But of all the ills  
Which I have felt, this last is most severe.  
Me and these mansions with what terrors armed  
O fortune, dost thou visit ! From some fiend  
This unforeseen dishonour takes its rise.  
A life like mine is not to be endured,  
And worse than death itself : for I so vast  
An ocean of calamity behold,  
That I can never hope to swim to land,  
Or stem these overwhelming waves of woe.  
Thee how shall I accost, or in what terms  
Sufficiently deplore thy wretched fate ?  
Swift as a bird 'scaped from the fowler's hand  
Hence hast thou vanished with impetuous flight,  
To the domains of sullen Pluto borne.  
Grievous, alas ! most grievous are these woes.  
But from some ancient stores of wrath, reserved  
By vengeful Heaven to punish the misdeeds  
Of a progenitor, I sure derive  
This great calamity.

*Chorus.* Not you alone  
Have such afflictions visited, O king ;  
You but in common with a thousand mourners  
Have lost the noble partner of your bed.

*Theseus.* Under earth's deepest caverns would I dwell,  
Amid the shades of everlasting night,  
A wretch best numbered with the silent dead,  
Now I, alas ! for ever am bereft  
Of thy loved converse ; for thou hast destroyed  
Me rather than thyself. Who will inform me

Whence death, with ruthless destiny combined,  
 Thy vitals reached? Can any one disclose  
 The real fact; or doth this palace harbour  
 A menial swarm in vain? For thee, for thee,  
 Alas, I grieve! What sorrows of my house,  
 Too great to be supported or expressed,  
 Are these which I have witnessed! But I perish;  
 These mansions are a desert, and my sons  
 Have lost their mother.

*Chorus.* Thou hast left, hast left  
 Thy friends, thou dearest and thou best of women,  
 Whom the resplendent sun or glimmering moon  
 E'er visited in her nocturnal round.  
 O my unhappy, my unhappy queen!  
 This house what dreadful evils have befallen!  
 Thy fate bedews these swimming eyes with  
 tears;  
 But, shuddering, to the sequel of our woes  
 Already I look forward.

*Theseus.* Ha! what means  
 The letter which she clasps in her dear hand,  
 What fresh intelligence can it contain?  
 Hath the deceased here written a request  
 For aught that to the marriage bed pertains,  
 And her sons' welfare? Thou pale shade, rely  
 On this assurance, that no other dame  
 The widowed couch of Theseus shall ascend,  
 Or enter these abodes. Yet with such force  
 These well-known characters the golden ring  
 Of her who is no more hath here impressed  
 Allure me, that the seal I will burst open,  
 And learn what charge to me she would convey.

*Chorus.* Some god, alas! hath in succession heaped  
 Evil on evil! such my fate, that life  
 Will be no longer any life to me  
 After this deed of horror. I pronounce  
 The house of my devoted kings o'erthrown,  
 And now no more a house. Yet, O ye gods,  
 This family, if possible forbear  
 To crush, and listen to my fervent vow.  
 Yet, like the soothsayer, my foreboding soul  
 An evil omen views.

*Theseus.* To my past woes,  
What woes, alas ! are added, far too great  
To be endured or uttered ! Wretched me !

*Chorus.* What fresh event is this ? . Speak, if the  
secret

To me you can disclose.

*Theseus.* With loudest voice,  
The letter echoes such atrocious crimes  
As are not to be borne. To 'scape this load  
Of misery, whither, whither shall I fly ?  
For I, alas ! am utterly undone.  
What strains of horror have these wretched eyes  
Beheld, in that portentous scroll expressed !

*Chorus.* All that is terrible your words announce.

*Theseus.* Within the door of my indignant lips  
No longer thus will I contain a deed  
Of unexampled guilt. O city, city !  
Hippolytus with brutal force hath dared  
To violate my bed, and set at nought  
Jove's awful eye. O Neptune, O my sire,  
Since thou hast firmly promised that thou  
thrice  
Wouldst grant me what I prayed for ; now fulfil  
One vow, and slay my son, nor let him 'scape  
This single day, if thou with me design  
To ratify the compact thou hast made.

*Chorus.* Recall that imprecation to the gods :  
For you, O king, your error will perceive ;  
Attend to my advice.

*Theseus.* These ears are closed :  
Moreover I will drive him from the land ;  
For of these twofold fates, or this or that  
Must smite him ; Neptune, when he hears my  
curses,  
Will plunge the miscreant to the shades of hell ;  
Else, cast forth from this region, and ordained  
To wander in some foreign land, a life  
Of the profoundest misery shall he drag.

*Chorus.* Behold how seasonably your son himself,  
Hippolytus, is coming : O subdue,  
My royal lord, subdue that baleful rage ;  
Consult the good of your unhappy house.



HIPPOLYTUS, THESEUS, CHORUS.

*Hippolytus.* Hearing your voice, I with the utmost speed  
Am hither come, O father ; though whence rise  
These groans I know not, and from you would  
learn.

Ha ! what is here ? Your consort, O my sire,  
I see, a breathless corse : this needs must cause  
The greatest wonder. Since I left her living  
How short the intervening space ! But now  
She oped those eyes to view the radiant sun.  
What dire mischance befell her, in what manner  
She died, inform me. Are you silent still ?  
In our calamities of no avail  
Is silence : for solicitous to know  
All that hath passed, with greediness the heart  
Explores a tale of woe ; nor is it just,  
My father, your afflictions to conceal  
From friends, and those who are yet more than  
friends.

*Theseus.* O mortals, why, unprofitably lost  
In many errors, strive ye to attain  
A thousand specious arts, some new device  
Still meditating, yet ye neither know  
One rare attainment, nor by your inquiries  
Could ever reach the gift of teaching those  
Who lack discretion how to think aright ?

*Hippolytus.* The sage you speak of, he who could compel  
Fools to grow wise, must be expert indeed.  
But since the subtle arguments you use  
Are so ill-timed, my sire, I greatly fear  
Your woes should cause your tongue to go beyond  
The bounds of reason.

*Theseus.* With some clearer test  
Man ought to have been furnished, to discern  
The thoughts and sever from the real friend  
Each vile impostor. All the human race  
Should have two voices—one of sacred truth,  
No matter what the other : 'gainst each plot  
Devised by foul injustice, hence the first  
Might in perpetual evidence come forth,  
And none could be deceived.

*Hippolytus.*

Hath any friend

Accused me in your ear, and fixed reproach  
Upon the guiltless? I with dire amaze  
Am smitten : in such incoherent words  
Your rage bursts forth that horror fills my soul.

*Theseus.*

Ah, whither will the mind of man proceed  
In its career? Can nature fix no bounds  
To impudence? For if this evil take  
Still deeper root through each succeeding age,  
The son grown more abandoned than the father,  
In pity to this world the gods should add  
Another world sufficient to contain  
All those who swerve from justice and the brood  
Of sinners. Look upon that impious wretch,  
Though sprung from my own loins, who hath defiled  
My nuptial couch ; too clearly the deceased  
His most atrocious villany hath proved.  
Show then thy face before thy injured sire,  
Since to this pitch of unexampled guilt  
Thou hast proceeded. Yet art thou the man  
Who holds familiar converse with the gods  
As though his life were perfect? Art thou chaste  
And pure from all defilement? By thy boasts  
I will not be deluded, nor suspect  
Thou canst impose upon the powers divine.  
Now glory in thy vegetable food,  
Disciple of the tuneful Orpheus, rave  
With Bacchus' frantic choir, and let the fumes  
Of varied learning soothe thee. Thou art caught.  
From me let all take warning, and avoid  
Those artful hypocrites who bait the snare  
With words denoting great austerity,  
While they contrive base projects. She is dead,  
And so thou deem'st thyself secure ; yet hence  
Thy guilt, O miscreant, is more clearly proved.  
What weightier oath, what plea canst thou devise  
This letter to confute, that thou mayst 'scape  
Unpunished for thy crime? Wilt thou allege  
She hated thee, and that thy spurious birth  
Makes the legitimate thy foes? 'Twill argue  
That she was prodigal of life, if thus  
She forfeited whate'er her soul held dear

Through enmity to thee. But man belike  
 Is privileged from lust, whose power innate  
 Misleads frail woman. Well am I aware  
 Both male and female are alike exposed  
 To danger, oft as Cytherea fires  
 The youthful heart, although a partial world  
 Forbear to brand our sex with equal shame.  
 But wherefore in an idle strife of words  
 With thee should I engage, when here, the corse,  
 That witness most irrefragable, lies?  
 With speed an exile from this land depart,  
 Nor dare to enter Athens by the gods  
 Erected, or the bounds of my domain.  
 For if from thee I tamely should submit  
 To wrongs like these, no more would Sinnis tell  
 How erst I slew him at the Isthmian pass,  
 But say my boasts are vain; nor would the rocks  
 Of Schiron, dashed by the surrounding waves,  
 Call me the scourge of villains.

*Chorus.*

At a loss

Am I of any mortal how to speak  
 As truly happy: for their lot who once  
 Were blest hath undergone a total change.

*Hippolytus.* Though dreadful, O my father, is the wrath  
 And vehement commotion of your soul,  
 The charge against me which now seems so strong,  
 If duly searched into, will prove devoid  
 Of truth and honour. I am not expert  
 At an harangue before assembled crowds,  
 Though somewhat better qualified to speak  
 Among my youthful comrades, and where few  
 Are present: a sufficient cause for this  
 May be assigned; for they who are held cheap  
 Among the wise, in more harmonious strains  
 Address the people. Yet am I constrained  
 By the severe emergency to burst  
 The bonds of silence, and begin my speech  
 With a discussion of that odious charge  
 By you first urged against me, to convict  
 And bar me from replying. Do your eyes  
 Behold the sun and wide extent of earth?  
 Say, what you list; of all the numerous tribes

Who here were born, there's not a man more chaste  
Than I am : the first knowledge I acquired  
Was this—to reverence the immortal gods,  
And with those friends associate who attempt  
Nought by the laws condemned, but are endued  
With a deep sense of virtuous shame, and scorn  
Either themselves to practise or to aid  
Unseemly actions. I ne'er made a jest  
Of those whom I converse with, O my sire,  
But to my friends have still remained the same  
When they are absent as when near at hand :  
And above all, by that peculiar crime  
In which you think that you have caught me now,  
Am I untainted : by impure delight  
I to this day have never been enticed.  
Of love and its transactions nought I know,  
Except what I from casual talk have heard  
Or seen in pictures, but I am not eager  
To look on these, for still my soul retains  
Its virgin purity. But if no credence  
My spotless chastity with you should find,  
On you is it incumbent to show how  
I was corrupted. Did your consort's charms  
Eclipse all other women? Could I hope  
Beneath your roofs to dwell, and with your wife  
That I the rich inheritance should gain?  
This sure had been the highest pitch of folly.  
But what a bait is empire! None at all  
To those who are discreet, unless a lust  
For kingly power already hath corrupted  
Those who delight in it. O'er all the sons  
Of Greece, in every honourable strife,  
Is it my great ambition to prevail,  
And be the first ; but rather in the state  
Would I live happy with my dearest friends,  
And occupy the second rank : for bliss  
Exempt from every danger, there is found,  
Transcending all that royalty can give.  
One thing there is by me not mentioned yet :  
Though all beside already have you heard.  
Had I a single witness like myself,  
Of tried veracity, and could debate

With her while yet she lived, you from the fact,  
 After a strict inquiry, might decide  
 Which was the criminal. But now, by Jove,  
 Who guards the oath inviolate, I swear,  
 And by the conscious ground on which we  
 tread,

That I your consort never did approach—  
 No, not in will or deed. May I expire  
 Stript of renown, and overwhelmed with shame,  
 Torn from my country, my paternal house,  
 An exile and a vagrant through the world, \*  
 Nor may the ocean or the earth receive  
 My breathless corse, if I have thus transgressed !  
 I know not whether 'twas through fear she lost ●  
 Her life, and more than this I must not say.  
 With her discretion amply hath supplied  
 The place of chastity ; I still have practised  
 That virtue, but, alas ! without success.

*Chorus.* Sufficient is it to refute the charge  
 That thou this oath hast taken, and called down  
 The powers immortal to attest its truth.

*Theseus.* Is he not rather an audacious cheat,  
 Trusting in magic arts, who dares to think  
 He by an oath can bias the resolves  
 Of his insulted sire ?

*Hippolytus.* The part you act  
 Challenges my astonishment. Were you  
 My son, and I your father, had you dared  
 To violate my wife, I would not banish,  
 But kill you.

*Theseus.* Seasonable remark : the sentence  
 Which on thyself with justice thou hast passed  
 I will not now inflict ; for instant death  
 Is grateful to the wretched. But ordained  
 An exile from thy native land to roam,  
 A life of tedious sorrow shalt thou drag  
 In foreign realms ; such are the wages due  
 To an unrighteous man.

*Hippolytus.* What means my sire ?  
 Instead of waiting till impartial time  
 The merits of my conduct ascertain,  
 Hence will you banish me ?

*Theseus.* Had I the power,  
Beyond the ocean, and where Atlas stands  
Upon the utmost limits of the world,  
So strong the hatred which to thee I bear—

*Hippolytus.* What, without searching into any proof  
From oath, or witness, or the voice of seers,  
Expel me uncondemned from these domains!

*Theseus.* This letter, which no soothsayer can require  
To make it better understood, the charge  
'Gainst thee authenticates; so to those birds  
Who hover o'er our heads I bid adieu.

*Hippolytus.* Why I am not permitted, O ye gods,  
To ope my mouth, when I my ruin owe  
To you whom I adore? I will not speak:  
For he I ought to move hath 'gainst my voice  
Closed his obdurate ears: I should infringe  
A solemn oath, and sport with Heaven in vain.

*Theseus.* To me past all endurance is that mask  
Of sanctity which thou assum'st. With speed  
Why go'st thou not from thy paternal land?

*Hippolytus.* Whither can I betake myself? What friend  
Will to his house admit an exiled wretch  
Charged with this great offence?

*Theseus.* Whoe'er receives  
Each base invader of the marriage bed,  
And with the wicked man delights to dwell.

*Hippolytus.* What wounds my soul, and from these eyes extorts  
The tear, is your believing me so wicked.

*Theseus.* There was a proper season for these groans  
And all thy forethought, when thou to dishonour  
The consort of thy father didst presume.

*Hippolytus.* O mansions, would to Heaven that ye a voice  
Could utter, and your testimony give,  
Whether I have transgressed.

*Theseus.* Hast thou recourse  
To witnesses who lack the power of speech?  
Beyond all words this deed thy guilt displays.

*Hippolytus.* In such position as to view my soul  
O could I stand, that I might cease to weep  
For the calamities I now endure!

*Theseus.* Thou thine own merits hast much more been  
wont

To reverence, than with pious awe to treat  
Thy parents as thy duty doth enjoin.

*Hippolytus.* Unhappy mother! wretched son! Avert  
The curse which on a spurious race attends,  
From those who share my friendship, righteous gods!

*Theseus.* Will ye not drag him from my sight, ye slaves?  
Did you not hear how I long since decreed  
He shall be banished!

*Hippolytus.* They should rue it soon,  
If they presumed to touch me. But yourself  
May from these realms expel me if you list.

*Theseus.* If thou obey not these commands, I will:  
For I feel no compassion for thy exile.

[*Exit THESEUS.*]

*Hippolytus.* The sentence is, it seems, already passed;  
Wretch that I am! My doom indeed I know,  
Yet know not in what language to express  
The pangs I feel. O thou to me most dear  
Of all the gods, Latona's virgin daughter,  
Who dwell'st with me, companion of the chase,  
Far from illustrious Athens let us fly;  
I to that city and Erectheus' land  
Now bid farewell. O thou Trœzenian realm,  
Fraught with each varied pleasure youth admires,  
Adieu! I see thee now for the last time,  
And these last parting words to thee address:  
Come, O ye youths, my comrades, hither come,  
Speak kindly to me now, and till we reach  
The frontiers of this country, on my steps  
Attend. For ye shall ne'er behold a man  
More chaste, though such I seem not to my sire.

[*Exit HIPPOLYTUS.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

When I reflect on Heaven's just sway,  
Each anxious thought is driven away;  
But, ah! too soon, hope's flattering prospect ends,  
And in this harassed soul despair succeeds,  
When I compare with human deeds  
What fate those deeds attends.

At each various period changing,  
Formed upon no settled plan,  
In a maze of errors ranging,  
Veers the precarious life of man.

I. 2.

May the kind gods' paternal care,  
Attentive to their votary's prayer,  
Grant unalloyed prosperity and wealth,  
Let me enjoy, without conspicuous fame,  
A character unstained by shame,  
With mental ease and health :  
Thus exempt from wrinkled sorrow,  
Would I ape the circling mode,  
Alter my conduct with the morrow,  
And snatch each pleasure as it flowed.

II. I.

Now I a heart no longer pure  
Against the shocks of fortune can secure,  
But feel at length e'en hope itself expire :  
Since from the land we see that star, whose light  
On Athens shone serenely bright,  
Removed by Theseus' ire.  
Lament, thick scattered on the shore, ye sands,  
Where Trœzene's city stands,  
And steep mountains, which ascending  
With thy hounds to trace the prey,  
Thou, Hippolytus, attending  
Dictynna, the swift hind didst slay.

II. 2.

No longer the Hænnetian steeds  
Yoked to thy chariot, o'er yon sacred meads  
Around the ring, wilt thou expertly guide.  
The Muse, whose lyre is doomed to sound no more,  
Shall the paternal house deplore,  
Bereft of thee its pride.  
For Dian's haunts beneath th' embowering shade  
Now no hand the wreath will braid.



Thou art from this region banished,  
Hence is Hymen's torch decayed :  
All prospects of thy love are vanished,  
The rivalry of many a maid.

## III.

By thy calamity inspired,  
With plaintive strains will I bewail thy fate,  
O wretched mother, who in vain  
The throes of childbirth didst sustain.  
I with indignant hate  
Against the gods themselves am fired.  
Ah, gentle graces, smiling at his birth,  
Could not you screen by your benignant power  
Your guiltless votary, in an evil hour  
Sentenced to wander far from his paternal earth ?  
The servant of Hippolytus, with looks  
Which witness grief, I see in haste approach.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Messenger.* Ye matrons, whither shall I speed my course  
To find the royal Theseus? If ye know,  
Inform me ; is the monarch here within ?

*Chorus.* Forth from the palace he in person comes.

THESEUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Messenger.* O Theseus, the intelligence I bring  
Deserves the serious thoughts of you, and all  
The citizens who, or in Athens dwell,  
Or on the borders of Trœzene's land.

*Theseus.* What mean'st thou? Hath some recent woe befallen  
These two adjacent cities ?

*Messenger.* In one word,  
To sum up all, Hippolytus is dead ;  
For he but for a moment views the sun.

*Theseus.* Say, by what hostile arm the miscreant fell.  
Did any one, whose wife with brutal force,  
As late his father's, he defiled, assail him ?

*Messenger.* The fiery coursers who his chariot drew  
Destroyed him, and the curses you addressed  
To the stern ruler of the deep, your sire,  
Against your son.

*Theseus.*

Thanks, O ye righteous gods ;

Now, Neptune, hast thou proved thyself my father,  
Since thou my imprecations hast fulfilled.

Inform me how he perished, how the sword  
Of justice smote the villain who hath wronged me.

*Messenger.* We, near the beach, oft dashed by the hoarse  
waves

Of ocean, smoothed his generous coursers' manes,  
Yet weeping. For a messenger arrived  
With tidings that Hippolytus no more  
Would to this realm be suffered to return,  
Sentenced by you to miserable exile.

But, to confirm this piteous tale, soon came  
The banished prince, and joined us on the strand,  
A numerous group of comrades on his steps  
Attended. After a long pause, he said,  
Ceasing his plaints : " Why still should I lament  
My doom, my father's word must be obeyed :  
Those steeds, ye servants, harness to the car ;  
Trœzene is no longer my abode."

Soon as we heard, all hastened : these commands  
Scarce was there time to issue, when we brought  
The ready coursers harnessed to their lord :  
Mounting his chariot then the reins he seized,  
When he his feet had in strong buskins clad :  
But first with hands outspread invoked the gods,  
And cried : " O righteous Jove, here end my life  
If I have sinned : but let my father know  
How much he wrongs us, whether we expire  
Or still behold the light." With lifted thong  
The rapid coursers onward then he drove ;  
We servants close behind our master's car  
Followed, along the Epidaurian road,  
Which leads direct to Argos. But at length,  
Passing the limits of this realm, we entered  
A wilderness adjoining to the coast  
Of the Saronian deep : a dreadful sound  
Was from the inmost caverns of the earth  
Sent forth, like Jove's own thunder, while the steeds,  
Astonished, with their heads and ears erect  
Towards Heaven, stopped short. An instant terror  
seized

On all of us ; we wondered whence the sound  
Could issue, till at length, as on the beach  
We looked, a mighty wave we saw, which reached  
The skies, and from our view concealed the cliffs  
Of Sciron, the whole isthmus covered o'er,  
And Æsculapius' rock, then to a size  
The most enormous swollen, and pouring forth  
With loud explosion foam on every side,  
The tide impelled it onward to the coast  
Where stood the harnessed steeds ; amid the storm  
And whirlwind's rage the wave disgorged a bull,  
Ferocious monster, with whose bellowings filled,  
All earth resounded horribly : our eyes  
Scarce could endure the sight. With panic fear  
The steeds were seized that instant : but meantime  
Their lord, who to the managing them long  
Had been inured, caught up with both his hands  
The reins, and drew them tight, as the rude oar.  
A sailor plies ; exerting all his strength  
Then backward leaned, and twisted them around  
His body : but the raging coursers gnashed  
Their steely curbs, and scoured along the field  
Regardless of the hand that steered their course,  
Or rein or polished car. Along the plain,  
If he attempted their career to guide,  
The bull in front appeared, to turn them back  
And e'en to madness scared : but if they ran  
Close to the shelving rocks with frantic rage,  
He, silently approaching, followed hard.  
Behind the chariot ; 'gainst a rugged cliff,  
Till he the wheel directing, had o'erthrown  
The vehicle. 'Twas dire confusion all :  
Upward the spokes and shivered axle flew ;  
The hapless youth, entangled in the reins,  
Confined by an inextricable bond,  
Was dragged along ; against the rock his head  
With violence was dashed, and his whole body  
Received full many a wound. These horrid words  
He uttered with a shriek : " Stop, O my steeds,  
Nor kill the master in whose stalls ye fed !  
O dreadful imprecations of my sire !  
Who is at hand to save a virtuous man ? "

Though many wished to rescue him, too late  
We came. But from the broken reins released,  
At length, I know not by what means, he fell,  
In a small portion yet the breath of life  
Retaining. But the horses, from all eyes,  
And that accursed monster, were concealed  
Among the mountains, where I cannot tell.  
Though I indeed, O king, am in your house,  
A servant, yet I never can be brought  
To think your son was with such guilt defiled,  
Though the whole race of women should expire  
Suspended in the noose, and every pine  
On Ida's summits were with letters filled ;  
So well am I convinced that he was virtuous.

*Chorus.* The measure of our recent woes is full :

No means, alas, are left for us to 'scape  
The sentence of unalterable fate.

*Theseus.* From hatred to the man who hath endured  
These sufferings I with pleasure heard thy  
tale :

But now through a just reverence for the gods,  
And for that wretch, because he was my son,  
I from his woes nor joy nor sorrow feel.

*Messenger.* But whither must we bear the dying youth,  
To gratify your wish, or how proceed ?  
Consider well : but if you would adopt  
My counsels, you with harshness would not treat  
Your hapless son.

*Theseus.* The miscreant hither bring ;  
That I, when face to face I shall behold  
Him who denies that he my nuptial bed  
Polluted, may convict him by my words,  
And these calamities the gods inflict.

[*Exit MESSENGER.*]

*Chorus.* To yours, O Venus, and your son's control,  
Whose glittering pinions speed his flight,  
The gods incline their stubborn soul,  
And mortals yielding to resistless might.  
For, o'er land and stormy main,  
Love is borne, who can restrain  
By more than magic art  
Each furious impulse of the heart :

Savage whelps on mountains bred,  
 Monsters in the ocean fed,  
 All who on earth behold the solar ray,  
 And man, his mild behests obey.  
 For you, O Venus, you alone  
 Sit on an unrivalled throne,  
 By each duteous votary feared,  
 As a mighty queen revered.

DIANA, THESEUS, CHORUS.

*Diana.* Thee, sprung from noble Ægeus, I command  
 To listen, for to thee Diana speaks,  
 The daughter of Latona. Why, O Theseus,  
 Do these disastrous tidings fill thy heart  
 With pleasure, when unjustly thou hast slain  
 Thy son, the false assertions of thy consort  
 On no clear proof believing? Yet too clear  
 Is the atrocious guilt thou hast incurred.  
 Covered with shame, why hid'st thou not thy head  
 In gloomy Tartarus, in the realms beneath;  
 Or, this abhorred pollution to escape,  
 On active wings why mount'st thou not the skies?  
 In the society of virtuous men  
 Thou canst not pass the remnant of thy life.  
 Hear me, O Theseus, while I state the ills  
 In which thou art involved: though now to thee  
 It can avail no longer, thy regret  
 Will I excite. The purposes I came for  
 Are these: to show that to thy son belongs  
 An upright heart, how to preserve his fame  
 His life he loses, and that frantic rage  
 Thy consort seized, whose conduct hath in part  
 Been generous: for, with lawless passion stung,  
 By that pernicious goddess, whom myself,  
 And all to whom virginity is dear,  
 Peculiarly abhor, she loved thy son,  
 And while she strove by reason to o'ercome  
 Th' assaults of Venus, unconsenting fell  
 By those vile stratagems her nurse devised,  
 Who to thy son the queen's disease revealed  
 Under the awful sanction of an oath;  
 But he, by justice rendered strong, complied not

With her solicitations, yet no wrongs  
Which he from thee experienced could provoke  
The pious youth to violate that faith  
Which he had sworn to. She meanwhile alarmed,  
Lest to his father he her guilt should prove,  
Wrote that deceitful letter, on thy soul  
Gaining too prompt a credence, and thy son  
Hath by her baleful artifice destroyed.

*Theseus.*

Ah me!

*Diana.* Doth what I have already spoken,  
O Theseus, wound thee? To the sequel lend  
A patient ear, and thou shalt find just cause  
To wail yet more. Thou know'st thy sire engaged  
That thy petitions thrice he would fulfil;  
And one of these, O thou most impious man,  
Which might have slain some foe, hast thou employed  
In the destruction of thy son. Thy father,  
Who rules the ocean, though to thee a friend,  
Gave what he promised, by strict honour bound.  
But thou to him, as well as me, must seem  
Devoid of worth, who waiting for no oath  
To be administered, nor till the seers  
Could utter a response, or length of time  
Enable thee to search into the truth,  
Thy curses hast too hastily poured forth  
Against thy son, and slain him.

*Theseus.*

Awful queen,

Would I were dead!

*Diana.*

Thou hast committed crimes

Most horrid; but mayst haply still obtain  
Heaven's gracious pardon: since at the behest  
Of Venus these calamitous events  
Took place to satiate her relentless ire.  
For 'tis a law among the gods that none  
Shall thwart another's will; we all renounce  
Such interference. Else be thou assured  
Had I not dreaded Jove, into such shame  
I never would have fall'n, nor suffered him  
Whom I hold dearest of the human race  
To perish. As for thy offence, thou first,  
By ignorance, from malice art absolved;  
Again, thy consort, the deceased, used words

Of strong persuasion to mislead thy soul.  
 Now by the mighty conflux of these woes  
 Thou chiefly art o'erwhelmed : but I, too, grieve.  
 For in a good man's death the righteous gods \*  
 Rejoice not, with their children and their house,  
 Though we the wicked utterly destroy.

HIPPOLYTUS, DIANA, THESEUS, CHORUS.

*Chorus.* Here comes the hapless youth, his graceful frame  
 And auburn locks disfigured. Wretched house !  
 What twofold woes, through Heaven's supreme behest,  
 Invade this family !

*Hippolytus.* How am I rent,  
 Ah me ! through those unrighteous vows pronounced  
 By an unrighteous father ! Through my head  
 Shoot dreadful pangs, and strong convulsions rend  
 My tortured brain. Ah me ! Lay down to rest  
 This shattered body ! Ye accursed steeds,  
 Though fed with my own hand, have ye destroyed  
 And slain your master. Ah, I by the gods  
 Entreat you, softly handle, O my friends,  
 This wounded frame. Who stands there on my right?  
 Carefully raise me up, and bear along  
 With even step a wretch who hath been cursed  
 By his mistaken sire. Jove, righteous Jove,  
 Behold'st thou this ? I who devoutly worshipped  
 The gods, and all the human race excelled  
 In chastity, deprived of life am plunged  
 Into the yawning subterraneous realms  
 Of Orcus. Sure I exercised in vain  
 Each pious toil to benefit mankind.  
 My pangs return afresh. Let loose your hold !  
 Come, death, thou best of medicines. Kill me ! kill me !  
 O for a sword to pierce my heart, and close  
 In endless slumbers this detested life.  
 How inauspicious was my father's curse !  
 That lingering vengeance which pursues the guilt  
 By my progenitors in ancient days  
 Committed, and my kindred who are stained  
 With recent murders, terminate in me,  
 No longer now suspended. O ye gods,  
 Why do ye punish me who had no share

In those enormities? But in what words  
Can I express myself, or how escape  
From the oppressive numbness which weighs down  
My senses? Would to Heaven the fates who haunt  
Pluto's abode, the realm of ancient night,  
Would lay me down in everlasting sleep!

*Diana.* With what calamity, O hapless youth,  
Hast thou been yoked! It is thy generous soul  
Which hath destroyed thee.

*Hippolytus.* From celestial lips  
How doth a fragrant odour breathe around!  
Amid my sufferings thee did I perceive,  
The pangs I feel were instantly assuaged.  
Diana sure is here.

*Diana.* Beside thee stands  
Thy favourite goddess.

*Hippolytus.* Dost thou see my woes,  
O thou whom I adore?

*Diana.* These eyes behold  
What thou endur'st: but they no tear must shed.

*Hippolytus.* Thy faithful comrade in the sylvan chase,  
Thy votary is no more.

*Diana.* Alas! no more!  
Yet e'en in death to me thou still art dear.

*Hippolytus.* Nor he who drove thy fiery steeds, and watched  
Thy images.

*Diana.* These stratagems, by Venus,  
From whom all mischief takes its rise, were planned.

*Hippolytus.* Too well I know the goddess who destroyed me.

*Diana.* For her neglected homage much enraged  
Against thee, to the chaste a constant foe.

*Hippolytus.* Us three I find her hatred hath undone.

*Diana.* Thy father, thou, and his unhappy wife  
Complete that number.

*Hippolytus.* I bewail my sire.

*Diana.* Him by her arts that goddess hath misled.

*Hippolytus.* To you, my father, this event hath proved  
A source of woes abundant.

*Theseus.* O my son,

I perish, and in life have now no joy.

*Hippolytus.* Yet more for you, who have been thus deluded,  
Than for myself, I grieve.



*Theseus.*

My son, I gladly

Would die to save thee.

*Hippolytus.*

Fatal gifts of Neptune

Your father.

*Theseus.*

Now most earnestly I wish

These lips had never uttered such a prayer.

*Hippolytus.* What then? You would have slain me, such  
your wrath.*Theseus.* Because I by the gods was then deprived  
Of understanding.*Hippolytus.*

O that in return

Mankind could with their curses blast the gods!

*Diana.* Be pacified : for in earth's darksome caves,  
The rage of Venus who on thee hath wreaked  
Such horrors for thy pure and virtuous soul  
I will not suffer unatoned to rest.  
For in requital, my vindictive hand  
With these inevitable darts shall smite  
The dearest of her votaries. But on thee  
These sufferings to reward will I bestow  
The greatest honours in Troëzene's realm :  
For to thy shade, ere jocund Hymen wave  
The kindled torch, each nymph her tresses shorn  
Shall dedicate, and with abundant tears  
For a long season thy decease bewail.  
In their harmonious ditties the chaste choir  
Of virgins ever shall record thy fate,  
Nor pass unnoticed Phædra's hapless love.  
But, O thou son of Ægeus, in those arms  
Embrace the dying youth ; for 'gainst thy will  
Didst thou destroy him. When the gods ordain  
That man should err, he cannot disobey.  
This counsel, O Hippolytus, to thee  
I give ; no hatred to thy father bear,  
For well thou know'st from whence thy fate arose.  
And now farewell ! for I am not allowed  
To view unholy corpses of the slain,  
Or with the pangs of those who breathe their  
last  
Pollute these eyes : too clearly I discern  
That thou art near the moment of thy death.

[Exit DIANA.]

*Hippolytus.* Farewell, blest virgin, grieve not thus to part  
From a most faithful votary, who with thee  
Hath long held converse. With my sire I end  
All strife at thy behest ; for to thy words  
I still have been obedient. Wretched me !  
Already thickest darkness overspreads  
These swimming eyes. My father, in your arms  
Receive me, and support this sinking frame.

*Theseus.* How, O my son, dost thou increase my woes !

*Hippolytus.* I perish, and already view the gates  
Of yon drear realms beneath.

*Theseus.* But wilt thou leave  
My soul polluted ?

*Hippolytus.* No, from the foul crime  
You I absolve.

*Theseus.* What saidst thou ? Shall the stain  
Of having shed thy blood no longer rest  
On me thy murderer ?

*Hippolytus.* Let Diana witness,  
Who with her shafts subdues the savage brood.

*Theseus.* How generous is this treatment of thy sire,  
My dearest son !

*Hippolytus.* Farewell ! a long adieu  
I bid to you, my father.

*Theseus.* Ah, how pious,  
How virtuous is thy soul !

*Hippolytus.* Implore the gods  
That all your race legitimate may tread  
In the same path.

*Theseus.* Desert me not, my son :  
Take courage.

*Hippolytus.* It is now, alas ! too late,  
For, O my sire, I die. Make no delay,  
But with this garment cover o'er my face. [*He dies.*]

*Theseus.* Minerva's fortress, thou Athenian realm,  
Of what a virtuous prince art thou deprived !  
Ah, wretched me ! how oft shall I reflect,  
O Venus, on the ills which thou hast caused.

*Chorus.* On our whole city hath this public loss  
Fallen unforeseen. Abundant tears shall flow.  
When bleed the mighty, their sad history leaves  
A more profound impression on the heart.

# ION

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MERCURY.

ION.

CHORUS OF CREUSA'S FEMALE

ATTENDANTS.

CREUSA.

XUTHUS.

OLD MAN.

SERVANT OF CREUSA.

PYTHIAN PRIESTESS.

MINERVA.

*Scene.*—THE VESTIBULE OF APOLLO'S TEMPLE AT DELPHI.

### MERCURY

By a celestial dame, was he who bears  
On brazen shoulders the incumbent load  
Of yonder starry heaven, where dwell the gods  
From ancient times, illustrious Atlas, sire  
To Maia, and from her I, Hermes, spring,  
The faithful messenger of mighty Jove.  
Now to this land of Delphi am I come,  
Where, seated on the centre of the world,  
His oracles Apollo to mankind  
Discloses, ever chaunting both events  
Present and those to come. Of no small note,  
In Greece, there is a city which derives  
Its name from Pallas, by her golden spear  
Distinguished. Phœbus in this realm compressed  
With amorous violence Erectheus' daughter,  
Creusa, underneath those craggy rocks  
North of Minerva's citadel, the kings  
Of Athens call them Macra. She endured,  
Without the knowledge of her sire (for such  
Was the god's will), the burden of her womb :  
But at the stated time, when in the palace  
She had brought forth a son, she to that cave,  
Where she th' embraces of the god hath known,  
Conveyed and left the child, to death exposed,  
Lodged in the hollow of an orbéd chest,  
Observant of the customs handed down  
By her progenitors, and Ericthonius,  
That earth-born monarch of her native land,  
Whom Pallas, daughter of imperial Jove,  
Placing two watchful dragons for his guard,

To the three damsels from Agraulos sprung  
Entrusted. Hence, among Erectheus' race,  
E'en from those times, an usage hath prevailed  
Of nurturing, 'midst serpents wrought in gold,  
Their tender progeny. Creusa left,  
Wrapt round her infant, whom she thus to death  
Abandoned, all the ornaments she had.  
Then this request, on my fraternal love  
Depending, Phœbus urged : " My brother, go  
To those blest children of their native soil,  
The famed Athenians (for full well thou know'st  
Minerva's city), from the hollow rock  
Taking this new-born infant, and the chest  
In which he lies, with fillets swathed around,  
Convey to my oracular abode,  
And place him in the entrance of my fane :  
What still is left undone my care shall add :  
For know he is my son." I, to confer  
A kindness on my brother Phœbus, bore  
The wicker chest away ; and, having oped  
Its cover that the infant might be seen,  
Just at the threshold of this temple lodged.  
But when the fiery coursers of the sun  
Rushed from heaven's eastern gate in swift career,  
Entering the mansion whence the god deals forth  
His oracles, a priestess on the child  
Fixed her indignant eyes, and wondered much  
What shameless nymph of Delphi could presume  
By stealth to introduce her spurious brood  
Into Apollo's house. She was inclined  
At first to cast him from the sacred threshold ;  
But, by compassion moved, the cruel deed  
Forbore, and, with paternal love, the god  
Aided the child, nor from his hallowed mansion  
Allowed him to be banished : him she took  
And nurtured, though she knew not from what mother  
He sprung, or that Apollo was his sire.  
To both his parents, too, the boy himself  
Remained a stranger. While he yet was young,  
Around the blazing altars, whence he fed,  
Playful he roamed ; but after he attained  
Maturer years, the Delphic citizens

As guardian of the treasures of the god  
 Employed, and found him faithful to his trust :  
 Still in this fane he leads a holy life.  
 Meanwhile Creusa, who the infant bore,  
 Wedded to Xuthus : fortune this event  
 Thus brought to pass ; a storm of war burst forth  
 'Twixt the Athenian race and them who dwell  
 In Chalcis, on Eubœa's stormy coast.  
 In concert with the former having toiled,  
 And joined in the destruction of their foes,  
 A royal bride, Creusa, he obtained,  
 Though not in Athens but Achaia born,  
 The son of Æolus, who sprung from Jove.  
 He and his consort have been childless long,  
 And therefore to these oracles of Phœbus  
 Are come in quest of issue. This event  
 The god hath caused to happen, nor forgets  
 His son, as some suppose ; for he on Xuthus,  
 Will, at his entering this prophetic dome,  
 Freely bestow, and call the stripling his ;  
 That when he comes to the maternal house,  
 Creusa may acknowledge him she bore,  
 While her amour with Phœbus rests concealed,  
 And this her son obtains th' inheritance  
 Of his maternal ancestors : through Greece  
 Th' immortal father hath decreed his son  
 Shall be called Ion, the illustrious founder  
 Of Asiatic realms. But I must go  
 Among the laurel's shadowy groves, and learn  
 From this young prophet what the fates ordain ;  
 For I behold Apollo's son come forth,  
 To hang the branches of the verdant bay  
 Before the portals of the fane. Now first  
 Of all the gods I hail him by his name,  
 The name of Ion which he soon shall bear.

[Exit MERCURY

*Ion.* Now the resplendent chariot of the sun  
 Shines o'er the earth : from its ethereal fires,  
 Beneath the veil of sacred night, the stars  
 Conceal themselves. Parnassus' cloven ridge,  
 Too steep for human footsteps to ascend,  
 Receives the lustre of its orient beams,

And through the world reflects them ; while the smoke  
Of fragrant myrrh ascends Apollo's roof ;  
The Delphic priestess on the holy tripod  
Now takes her seat, and to the listening sons  
Of Greece, those truths in mystic notes unfolds,  
With which the gods inspire her labouring breast.  
But, O ye Delphic ministers of Phœbus,  
Now to Castalia's silver fount repair,  
And when ye have performed the due ablutions,  
Enter the temple ; let no word escape  
Your lips of evil omen, mildly greet  
Each votary, and expound the oracles  
In your own native language. But the toils  
Which I from childhood to the present hour  
Have exercised, with laureate sprays and wreaths  
Worn at our high solemnities, to cleanse  
The vestibule of Phœbus, I repeat,  
Sprinkling the pavement with these lustral drops,  
And with my shafts will I repel the flocks  
Of birds who taint the offerings of the god.  
For like a friendless orphan, who ne'er knew  
A mother's or a father's fostering care,  
In Phœbus' shrine, which nurtured me, I serve

## ODE.

## I.

In recent verdure ever gay,  
Hail, O ye scions of the bay,  
Which sweep Apollo's fane ;  
Cropt from the god's adjacent bowers,  
Where rills bedew the vernal flowers,  
And with perpetual streams refresh the plain ;  
The sacred myrtle here is found,  
Whose branches o'er the consecrated ground  
I wave, as day by day ascends  
The sun with rapid wing,  
Waking to toil which never ends,  
And zealous in the service of my king.  
O Pæan, Pæan, from Latona sprung,  
Still mayst thou flourish blest and young !

## II.

My labours with renown shall meet ;  
 \* O Phœbus, the prophetic seat  
     Revering, at thy fane  
     A joyful minister I stand,  
     Serving with an officious hand  
 No mortal, but the blest immortal train.  
     Nor by these glorious toils oppress  
 Am I ignobly covetous of rest ;  
     For dread Apollo is my sire ;  
     To him, to him I owe  
     My being, nurtured in his choir,  
 And in the fostering god a father know.  
 O Pæan, Pæan, from Latona sprung,  
     Still mayst thou flourish blest and young !

But from this painful task will I desist,  
 And with the laurel cease to sweep the ground :  
 Next, from a golden vase, is it my office  
 To pour the waters of Castalia's fount,  
 Sprinkling its lustral drops : for I am free  
 From lust and its pollutions. May I serve  
 Apollo ever thus, or cease to serve him  
 When I some happier fortune shall attain !  
 But, ha ! the birds are here, and leave their nests  
 Upon Parnassus : wing not to this dome  
 Your flight, and on the gilded battlements  
 Forbear to perch. My arrows shall transpierce thee,  
 Herald of Jove, O thou, whose hooked beak  
 Subdues the might of all the feathered tribes.  
 But lo ! another comes ! The swan his course  
 Steers to the altar. Wilt thou not retire  
 Hence with those purple feet ? Apollo's lyre,  
 In concert warbling with thy dulcet strains,  
 Shall not redeem thee from my bow : direct  
 Thy passage to the Delian lake—obey,  
 Or streaming blood shall interrupt thy song.  
 But what fresh bird approaches ? Would she build  
 Under these pinnacles a nest to hold  
 Her callow brood ? Soon shall the whizzing shaft  
 Repel thee. Wilt thou not comply ? Where Alpheus

Winds through the channeled rocks his passage, go,  
 And rear thy twittering progeny, or dwell  
 Amid the Isthmian groves, that Phœbus' gifts  
 And temples no defilement may receive.  
 For I am loth to take away your lives,  
 Ye wingéd messengers, who to mankind  
 Announce the will of the celestial powers.  
 But I on Phœbus must attend, performing  
 The task assigned me with unwearied zeal,  
 And minister to those who give me food.

CHORUS, ION.

- Chorus.* 'Tis not in Athens only that the fane  
 Where dutèous homage to the gods is paid,  
 Or altar for Agyian Phœbus reared  
 With many a stately column is adorned ;  
 But in these mansions of Latona's son  
 From those twin deities portrayed there beams  
 An equal splendour on the dazzled sight,
- 1st Semichorus.* See there Jove's son who with his golden  
 falchion  
 Slays the Leruæan Hydra ! O my friend,  
 Observe him well.
- 2nd Semichorus.* I do.
- 1st Semichorus.* Another stands  
 Beside him brandishing a kindled torch.
- 2nd Semichorus.* He whose exploits I on my woof described ?
- 1st Semichorus.* The noble Iolaus, who sustained  
 Alcides' shield, and in those glorious toils  
 Was the sole partner with the son of Jove.  
 Him also mark who on a wingéd steed  
 Is seated, how with forceful arm he smites  
 The triple-formed Chimæra breathing fire.
- 2nd Semichorus.* With thee these eyes retrace each varied  
 scene.
- 1st Semichorus.* Look at the giants' conflict with the gods  
 Depicted on the wall.
- 2nd Semichorus.* There, there, my friends.
- 1st Semichorus.* Behold'st thou her who 'gainst Enceladus  
 The dreadful Ægis brandishes ?
- 2nd Semichorus.* I see  
 Pallas, my goddess.



*1st Semichorus.* And the forkéd flames,  
With which th' impetuous thunderbolt descends,  
Hurled from the skies by Jove's unerring arm?

*2nd Semichorus.* I see, I see! Its livid flashes smite  
Mimas the foe, and with his pliant thyrsus  
Another earth-born monster Bacchus slays.

*Chorus.* On thee I call, O thou who in this fane  
Art stationed: is it lawful to advance  
Into the inmost sanctuary's recess  
With our feet bare?

*Ion.* This cannot be allowed,  
Ye foreign dames.

*Chorus.* Wilt thou not answer me?

*Ion.* What information wish ye to receive?

*Chorus.* Say, is it true that Phœbus' temple stands  
On the world's centre?

*Ion.* 'Tis with garlands decked  
And Gorgons are placed round it.

*Chorus.* So fame tells.

*Ion.* If ye before these portals have with fire  
Consumed the salted cates, and wish to know  
Aught from Apollo, to this altar come;  
But enter not the temple's dread recess  
Till sheep are sacrificed.

*Chorus.* I comprehend thee;  
Nor will we break the god's established laws,  
But with the pictures which are here without  
Amuse our eyes.

*Ion.* Ye may survey them all  
At leisure.

*Chorus.* Hither have our rulers sent us,  
The sanctuary of Phœbus to behold.

*Ion.* Inform me to what household ye belong.

*Chorus.* Minerva's city is the place where dwell  
Our sovereigns. But lo! she herself appears  
To whom the questions thou hast asked relate.

CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

*Ion.* Thy countenance, whoe'er thou be, O woman,  
Proves thou art noble, and of gentle manners:  
For by their looks we fail not to discern  
Those of exalted birth. But with amazement,

Closing those eyes, thou strik'st me, and with tears  
Largely bedewing those ingenuous cheeks,  
Since thou hast seen Apollo's holy fane.  
Whence can such wayward grief arise? The sight  
Of this auspicious sanctuary, which gives  
Delight to others, causes thee to weep.

*Creusa.* Stranger, you well may wonder at my tears,  
For since I viewed these mansions of the god,  
I have been thinking of a past event ;  
And though myself indeed am here, my soul  
Remains at home. O ye unhappy dames !  
O most audacious outrages committed  
By the immortal gods ! To whom for justice  
Can we appeal, if, through the wrongs of those  
Who rule the world with a despotic power,  
We perish ?

*Ion.* What affliction unrevealed  
Makes thee despond ?

*Creusa.* None. I have dropped the subject.  
What follows I suppress, nor must you seek  
To learn aught farther.

*Ion.* But say, who thou art  
Whence cam'st thou, in what region wert thou  
born,  
And by what name must we distinguish thee ?

*Creusa.* Creusa is my name, my sire Erectheus,  
In Athens first I drew my vital breath.

*Ion.* O thou in that famed city who resid'st,  
And by illustrious parents hast been nurtured,  
How much do I revere thee !

*Creusa.* I thus far,  
But in nought else, am blest.

*Ion.* I by the gods  
Conjure thee, answer, if the world speak truth.

*Creusa.* What question's this you would propose, O stranger ?  
I wish to learn.

*Ion.* Sprung the progenitor  
Of thy great father from the teeming earth ?

*Creusa.* Thence Ericthonius ; but my noble race  
Avails me not.

*Ion.* And did Minerva rear  
The warrior from the ground ?

- Creusa.* With virgin arms  
For she was not his mother.
- Ion.* Of the child  
Disposing as in pictures 'tis described?
- Creusa.* To Cecrops' daughters him she gave for nurture,  
With strict injunctions never to behold him.
- Ion.* I hear those virgins oped the wicker chest  
In which the goddess lodged him.
- Creusa.* Hence their doom  
Was death, and with their gore they stained the  
rock.
- Ion.* Let that too pass. But is this rumour true,  
Or groundless?
- Creusa.* What's your question? for with leisure  
I am not overburdened.
- Ion.* Did Erectheus,  
Thy royal father, sacrifice thy sisters?
- Creusa.* He feared not in his country's cause to slay  
Those virgins.
- Ion.* By what means didst thou alone  
Of all thy sisters 'scape?
- Creusa.* A new-born infant,  
I still was in my mother's arms.
- Ion.* Did earth  
Indeed expand her jaws, and swallow up  
Thy father?
- Creusa.* Neptune with his trident smote  
And slew him.
- Ion.* Is the spot on which he died  
Called Macra?
- Creusa.* For what reason do you ask  
This question? To my memory what a scene  
Have you recalled!
- Ion.* Doth not the Pythian god  
Revere, and with his radiant beams adorn  
That blest abode?
- Creusa.* Revere! But what have I  
To do with that? Ah, would to heaven I ne'er  
Had seen the place!
- Ion.* What then! Dost thou abhor  
What Phœbus holds most dear?
- Creusa.* Not thus, O stranger;

Though I know somewhat base that has been done  
Under those caverns.

*Ion.* What Athenian lord  
Received thy plighted hand?

*Creusa.* No citizen  
Of Athens ; but a sojourner, who came  
Out of another country.

*Ion.* Who? He sure  
Was of some noble lineage?

*Creusa.* Xuthus, son  
Of Æolus, who sprung from Jove.

*Ion.* How gained  
This foreigner the hand of thee, a native?

*Creusa.* Eubœa is a region on the confines  
Of Athens.

*Ion.* With the briny deep between,  
As fame relates.

*Creusa.* Those bulwarks he laid waste,  
With Cecrops' race a comrade in the war.

*Ion.* He thither came perhaps as an ally,  
And afterwards obtained thee for his bride.

*Creusa.* In me the dower of battle, and the prize  
Of his victorious spear, did he receive.

*Ion.* Alone, or with thy husband, art thou come  
These oracles to visit?

*Creusa.* With my lord :  
But to Trophonius' cavern he is gone.

*Ion.* As a spectator only, or t' explore  
The mystic will of Fate?

*Creusa.* He hopes to gain  
From him and from Apollo one response.

*Ion.* Seek ye the general fruit earth's bosom yields,  
Or children?

*Creusa.* We are childless, though full long  
Have we been wedded.

*Ion.* Hast thou never known  
The pregnant mother's throes? Art thou then barren?

*Creusa.* Phœbus well knows I am without a son.

*Ion.* O wretched woman, who in all beside  
Art prosperous : Fortune here, alas, deserts thee

*Creusa.* But who are you? How happy do I deem  
Your mother!

- Ion.* An attendant on the god  
They call me ; and, O woman, such I am.
- Creusa.* Sent from your city as a votive gift,  
Or by some master sold?
- Ion.* I know this only,  
That I am called Apollo's.
- Creusa.* In return,  
I too, O stranger, pity your hard fate,
- Ion.* Because I know not either of my parents.
- Creusa.* Beneath this fane or some more lowly dome  
Reside you ?
- Ion.* This whole temple of the god  
Is my abode, here sleep I.
- Creusa.* While an infant,  
Or since you were a stripling, came you hither ?
- Ion.* The persons who appear to know the truth  
Assert I was a child.
- Creusa.* What Delphic nurse  
Performed a mother's office ?
- Ion.* I ne'er clung  
To any breast—she reared me.
- Creusa.* Hapless youth,  
Who reared you ? How have I discovered woes  
Which equal those I suffer !
- Ion.* Phœbus' priestess,  
Whom as my real mother I esteem.
- Creusa.* But how were you supported till you reached  
Maturer years ?
- Ion.* I at the altar fed,  
And on the bounty of each casual guest.
- Creusa.* Whoe'er she was, your mother sure was wretched
- Ion.* Perhaps to me some woman owes her shame.
- Creusa.* But say, what wealth you have ? For you are drest  
In a becoming garb.
- Ion.* I am adorned  
With these rich vestments by the god I serve.
- Creusa.* Did you make no researches to discover  
Your parents ?
- Ion.* I have not the slightest clue  
To guide my steps.
- Creusa.* Alas, another dame  
Like sufferings with your mother hath endured.

*Ion.* Who ! Tell me. Thy assistance wouldst thou give,  
I should rejoice indeed.

*Creusa.* She for whose sake  
I hither came before my lord arrive.

*Ion.* What are thy wishes in which I can serve thee ?

*Creusa.* I would obtain an oracle from Phœbus  
In private.

*Ion.* Name it : for of all beside  
Will I take charge.

*Creusa.* Now to my words attend—  
Yet shame restrains me.

*Ion.* Then wilt thou do nothing :  
For Shame's a goddess not for action formed.

*Creusa.* One of my friends informs me that by Phœbus  
She was embraced.

*Ion.* A woman by Apollo !  
Use not such language, O thou foreign dame.

*Creusa.* And that without the knowledge of her sire,  
She bore the god a son.

*Ion.* This cannot be ;  
Her modesty forbids her to confess  
What mortal wronged her.

*Creusa.* No ; she suffered all  
That she complains of, though her tale be wretched.

*Ion.* In what respect, if by the bonds of love  
She to the god was joined ?

*Creusa.* The son she bore  
She also did cast forth.

*Ion.* Where is the boy  
Who was cast forth, doth he behold the light ?

*Creusa.* None knows ; and for this cause would I consult  
The oracle.

*Ion.* But if he be no more,  
How died he ?

*Creusa.* Much she fears the beasts devoured  
Her wretched child.

*Ion.* What proof hath she of this ?

*Creusa.* She came where she exposed, and found him  
not.

*Ion.* Did any drops of blood distain the path ?

*Creusa.* None, as she says ; although full long she searched  
Around the field.

*Ion.* But since that hapless boy  
Perished, how long is it?

*Creusa.* Were he yet living,  
His age would be the same with yours.

*Ion.* The god  
Hath wronged her, yet the mother must be wretched.

*Creusa.* Since that hath she produced no other child.

*Ion.* But what if Phœbus bore away by stealth  
His son, and nurtured him?

*Creusa.* He acts unjustly,  
Alone enjoying what to both belongs.

*Ion.* Ah me! Such fortune bears a close resemblance  
To my calamity.

*Creusa.* I make no doubt,  
O stranger, but your miserable mother  
Wishes for you.

*Ion.* Revive not piteous thoughts  
By me forgotten.

*Creusa.* I my question cease;  
Now finish your reply.

*Ion.* Art thou aware  
In what respect thou hast unwisely spoken?

*Creusa.* Can aught but grief attend that wretched dame?

*Ion.* How is it probable the god should publish  
By an oracular response, the fact  
He wishes to conceal?

*Creusa.* If here he sit  
Upon his public tripod to which Greece  
Hath free access.

*Ion.* He blushes at the deed;  
Of him make no inquiries.

*Creusa.* The poor sufferer  
Bewails her fortunes.

*Ion.* No presumptuous seer  
To thee this mystery will disclose: for Phœbus,  
In his own temple with such baseness charged,  
Justly would punish him who should expound  
To thee the oracle. Depart, O woman;  
For of th' immortal powers we must not speak  
With disrespect. This were the utmost pitch  
Of frenzy should we labour to extort  
From the unwilling gods those hidden truths

They mean not to disclose, by slaughtered sheep,  
 Before their altars, or the flight of birds.  
 If 'gainst Heaven's will we strive to reach down  
 blessings,  
 In our possession they become a curse :  
 But what the gods spontaneously confer  
 Is beneficial.

*Chorus.* In a thousand forms,  
 A thousand various woes o'erwhelm mankind :  
 But life can scarce afford one happy scene.  
*Creusa.* Elsewhere as well as here art thou unjust  
 To her, O Phœbus, who though absent speaks  
 By me. For thou hast not preserved thy son  
 Whom thou wert bound to save ; nor wilt thou answer  
 His mother's questions, prophet as thou art :  
 That, if he be no more, there may a tomb  
 For him be heaped, or haply, if he live,  
 She may at length behold her dearest child.  
 But now no more of this, if me the god  
 Forbid to ask what most I wish to know.  
 Conceal, O gentle stranger (for I see  
 My lord the noble Xuthus is at hand,  
 Who from the cavern of Trophonius comes),  
 What thou hast heard, lest I incur reproach  
 For thus divulging secrets, and my words,  
 Not as I spoke them, should be blazed abroad :  
 For the condition of our sex is hard,  
 Subject to man's caprice ; and virtuous dames,  
 From being mingled with the bad, are hated.  
 Such, such is woman's miserable doom.

XUTHUS, CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

*Xuthus.* I to the god begin t' address myself :  
 Him first I hail ; and you my consort next.  
 Hath my long stay alarmed you ?

*Creusa.* No : thou com'st  
 To her who is oppress'd with anxious thoughts.  
 Say from Trophonius what response thou bring'st ;  
 Doth hope of issue wait us !

*Xuthus.* He refused  
 T' anticipate the prophecies of Phœbus ;  
 All that he said was this : nor I, nor thou,



Shall from this temple to our home return  
Thus destitute of children.

- Creusa.* Holy mother  
Of Phœbus, to our journey grant success ;  
And O may fortune yet have bliss in store  
For those on whom thy son erst deigned to smile.
- Xuthus.* Thy vows shall be accomplished : but what prophet  
Officiates in this temple of the god ?
- Ion.* I here without am stationed ; but within,  
O stranger, others near the tripod take  
Their seat, from Delphi's noblest citizens  
Chosen by lot.
- Xuthus.* 'Tis well : I have attained  
The utmost of my wishes, and will enter  
The sanctuary, for here before the temple,  
I am informed, the oracles in public  
To foreigners are uttered ; on this day  
(For 'tis a solemn feast) we mean to hear  
The god's prophetic voice. O woman, take  
Branches of laurel, and at every altar  
Offer up vows to the immortal powers,  
That I from Phœbus' temple may procure  
This answer, that my wishes shall be crowned  
With an auspicious progeny.
- Creusa.* Depend  
On their completion : but were Phœbus' self  
Disposed to make atonement for past wrongs,  
He now, alas ! no longer can to me  
Entirely be a friend : yet I from him  
Whate'er he pleases am constrained to take,  
Because he is a god.
- [*Exeunt XUTHUS and CREUSA.*]
- Ion.* In mystic words,  
Why doth this foreign dame, against our god  
Still glance reproaches, through a strong attachment  
To her for whom she hither to consult  
The oracle is come ; or doth she hide  
Some circumstance unfit to be disclosed ?  
But with Erectheus' daughter what concern  
Have I, what interest in th' Athenian realm ?  
I'll go and sprinkle from the golden vase  
The lustral waters. Yet must I condemn

Phœbus : what means he ? To the ravished maid  
Unfaithful hath he proved : his son, by stealth  
Begotten, left neglected to expire.  
Act thou not thus ; but since thou art supreme  
In majesty, let virtue too be thine.  
For whosoever of the human race  
Transgresses, with severity the gods  
Punish his crimes : then how can it be just  
For you, whose written laws mankind obey,  
Yourselves to break them ? Though 'twill never be,  
This supposition will I make, that thou,  
Neptune, and Jove, who in the heaven bears rule,  
Should make atonement to mankind for those  
Whom ye have forcibly deflow'ed ; your temples  
Must ye exhaust to pay the fines imposed  
On your base deeds : for when ye follow pleasure,  
Heedless of decency, ye act amiss ;  
No longer is it just to speak of men  
As wicked, if the conduct of the gods  
We imitate : our censures rather ought  
To fall on those who such examples give. [*Exit ION.*]

## CHORUS.

## ODE.

## I.

O thou who aid'st the matron's throes,  
Come Eilithya, for to thee I sue ;  
Minerva next with honours due  
I hail, who by Prometheus' aid arose  
In arms refulgent from the front of Jove,  
Nor knew a mother's fostering love ;  
Victorious queen, armed with resistless might,  
O'er Pythian fanes thy plumage spread,  
Forsake awhile Olympus' golden bed,  
O wing thy rapid flight  
To this blest land where Phœbus reigns,  
This centre of the world his chosen seat,  
Where from his tripod in harmonious strains  
Doth he th' unerring prophecy repeat :  
With Latona's daughter join,

For thou like her art spotless and divine :  
Sisters of Phœbus, with persuasive grace,  
    Ye virgins sue, nor sue in vain,  
That, from his oracles, Erectheus' race  
To the Athenian throne a noble heir may gain.

## II.

Object of Heaven's peculiar care  
Is he whose children, vigorous from their birth,  
    Nursed on the foodful lap of earth,  
Adorn his mansion and his transports share :  
No patrimonial treasures can exceed  
    Theirs who by each heroic deed  
Augment the fame of an illustrious sire  
    And to their children's children leave  
Th' invaluable heritage entire.  
    In troubles we receive  
    From duteous sons a timely aid,  
And social pleasure in our prosperous hours.  
The daring youth, in brazen arms arrayed  
Guards with protended lance his native towers.  
    To lure these eyes, though gold were spread,  
Though Hymen wantoned on a regal bed,  
Such virtuous offspring would my soul prefer.  
    The lonely childless life I hate,  
And deem that they who choose it greatly err,  
Blest with a teeming couch, I ask no kingly state.

## III.

Ye shadowy groves where sportive Pan is seen,  
Stupendous rocks whose pine-clad summits wave,  
    Where oft near Macra's darksome cave,  
Light spectres, o'er the consecrated green,  
    Agraulos' daughters lead the dance  
Before the portals of Minerva's fane  
    To the shrill flute's varied strain.  
When from thy caverns, through the vale around,  
    O Pan, the cheering notes resound.  
Under those hanging cliffs (abhorred mischance !  
    Some nymph a son to Phœbus bore,  
Whom she to ravenous birds a bloody feast

Exposed, and to each savage beast ;  
 Her shame, her conscious guilt, deplore.  
 Nor at my loom, nor by the voice of Fame  
 Have I e'er heard it said,  
 The base-born issue of some human maid,  
 Begotten by a god, to bliss have any claim.

ION, CHORUS.

*Ion.* O ye attendants on your noble mistress,  
 Who watch around the basis of this fane,  
 Say, whether Xuthus have already left  
 The tripod and oracular recess,  
 Or in the temple doth he stay to ask  
 More questions yet about his childless state ?

*Chorus.* He is within, nor yet hath passed the threshold  
 Of these abodes, O stranger : but we hear  
 The sounding hinges of yon gates announce  
 His coming forth : and see, my lord advances !

XUTHUS, ION, CHORUS.

*Xuthus.* On thee, my son, my every bliss attend :  
 For such an introduction suits my speech.

*Ion.* With me all's well : but learn to think aright,  
 And we shall both be happy.

*Xuthus.* Give thy hand,  
 And suffer me t' embrace thee.

*Ion.* Are your senses  
 Yet unimpaired, or hath the secret curse  
 Some god inflicts, O stranger, made you frantic ?

*Xuthus.* In my right mind am I, if having found  
 Him whom I hold most dear, I wish t' embrace him.

*Ion.* Desist, nor touch me, lest your rude hand tear  
 The garlands of the god.

*Xuthus.* Now in these arms  
 Thee I have caught, no pledge will I receive ;  
 For I've discovered my beloved son.

*Ion.* Wilt thou not leave me, ere these shafts transpierce  
 Your vitals ?

*Xuthus.* But why shun me, now thou know'st  
 That I to thee by such strong ties am bound ?

*Ion.* Because to me it is no welcome office

Foolish and frantic strangers to recall  
To their right reason.

*Xuthus.* Take my life away,  
And burn my corse ; but if thou kill me, thou  
Wilt be thy father's murderer.

*Ion.* How are you  
My father? Is not this ridiculous?

*Xuthus.* In a few words to thee would I explain  
Our near connection.

*Ion.* What have you to say?

*Xuthus.* I am thy sire, and thou art my own son.

*Ion.* Who told you this?

*Xuthus.* Apollo, by whose care  
Thou, O my son, wert nurtured in this fane.

*Ion.* You for yourself bear witness.

*Xuthus.* Having searched  
The oracles of this unerring god—

*Ion.* Some phrase of dubious import have you heard,  
Which hath misled you.

*Xuthus.* Heard I not aright?

*Ion.* What said Apollo?

*Xuthus.* That the man who meets me—

*Ion.* Where?

*Xuthus.* As I from the temple of the god  
Am going forth.

*Ion.* What fortunes him await?

*Xuthus.* Those of my son.

*Ion.* By birth or through adoption?

*Xuthus.* A gift and my own child.

*Ion.* Am I the first  
You light on?

*Xuthus.* I have met none else, my son.

*Ion.* Whence springs this strange vicissitude of fortune?

*Xuthus.* The same event with wonder strikes us both.

*Ion.* To you, what mother bore me?

*Xuthus.* This I know not.

*Ion.* Did not Apollo say?

*Xuthus.* I was delighted

With what he had revealed, and searched no farther.

*Ion.* From mother earth I surely sprung.

*Xuthus.* The ground  
Brings forth no children.

*Ion.* How can I be yours?

*Xuthus.* I know not ; but refer thee to the god.

*Ion.* Some other subject let us now begin.

*Xuthus.* This is a topic, O my son, to me  
Most interesting.

*Ion.* The joys of lawless love  
Have you experienced?

*Xuthus.* Yes, through youthful folly.

*Ion.* Ere you were wedded to Erectheus' daughter?

*Xuthus.* Not ever since.

*Ion.* Did you beget me then?

*Xuthus.* The time just tallies.

*Ion.* But how came I hither?

*Xuthus.* This quite perplexes.

*Ion.* From a distant land?

*Xuthus.* In this I also find new cause for doubt.

*Ion.* Did you ascend erewhile the Pythian rock?

*Xuthus.* To celebrate the festivals of Bacchus.

*Ion.* But to what host did you repair?

*Xuthus.* The same  
Who me with Delphic maids—

*Ion.* Initiated?

Or what is it you mean?

*Xuthus.* The Mænades  
Of Bromius too.

*Ion.* While sober, or o'erpowered  
By wine?

*Xuthus.* The joys of Bacchus had ensnared me.

*Ion.* Hence it appears I was begotten then.

*Xuthus.* Fate hath at length discovered thee, my son.

*Ion.* But to this fane how could I come?

*Xuthus.* The nymph  
Perhaps exposed thee.

*Ion.* I from servitude  
Have made a blest escape.

*Xuthus.* Now, O my son,  
Embrace thy sire.

*Ion.* I ought not to distrust  
The god.

*Xuthus.* Thou think'st aright.

*Ion.* And is there aught  
That I can wish for more—

*Xuthus.* Thou now behold'st  
As much as it concerns thee to behold.

*Ion.* Than from Jove's son to spring?

*Xuthus.* Which is thy lot.

*Ion.* May I embrace the author of my birth?

*Xuthus.* To the god yielding credence.

*Ion.* Hail, my father.

*Xuthus.* With ecstasy that title I receive.

*Ion.* This day—

*Xuthus.* Hath made me happy.

*Ion.* My dear mother,

Shall I e'er see thee? More than ever now  
(Be who thou wilt) I for that moment long.  
But thou perhaps art dead, and I for thee  
Can now do nothing.

*Chorus.* With our monarch's house  
We share the glad event: yet could I wish  
My royal mistress and Erectheus' race  
With children had been blest.

*Xuthus.* The god, my son,  
In thy discovery hath done well; to him  
I owe this happy union. Thou too find'st  
A father, though thou never knew'st till now  
By whom thou wert begotten: with thy wishes  
Mine, O my son, conspire, that thou mayst find  
Thy mother, and that I may learn who bore thee.  
By leaving this to time, we may at length  
Perhaps discover her: but now forsaking  
Apollo's temple and this exiled state,  
With duteous zeal accompany thy sire  
To Athens, where this heritage awaits thee,  
A prosperous sceptre and abundant wealth:  
Nor though thou want one parent, can the name,  
Or of ignoble, or of poor be thine:  
But for thy noble birth shalt thou be famed,  
And thy abundant treasures. Art thou silent?  
Why dost thou fix thine eyes upon the ground?  
Thy anxious thoughts return, and thou, thus changed  
From thy past cheerfulness, alarm'st my soul.

*Ion.* Things at a distance wear not the same semblance  
As when on them we fix a closer view.  
I certainly with gratitude embrace

My better fortunes, having found in you  
A father. But whence rose my anxious thoughts  
Now hear : in Athens, I am told, a native  
Is deemed a glorious name, not so the race  
Of aliens. I its gates shall enter laden  
With these two evils ; from a foreign sire  
Descended, and myself a spurious child.  
Branded with this reproach, doomed to continue  
In base obscurity, I shall be called  
A man of no account : but if intruding  
Into the highest stations in the city,  
I aim at being great, I shall incur  
Hate from the vulgar, for superior power  
Is to the people odious ; but the friends  
Of virtue, they whose elevated souls  
With real wisdom are endued, observe  
A modest silence, nor with eager haste  
Rush into public business ; such as these  
Will laugh and brand me with an idiot's name,  
For not remaining quiet in a land  
Which with tumultuous outrages abounds.  
Again, will those of a distinguished rank  
Who at the helm preside, when I attempt  
To raise myself to honour, be most wary  
How on an alien they their votes confer,  
For thus, my sire, 'tis ever wont to be ;  
They who possess authority and rank  
Loathe their competitors. But when I come,  
Unwelcome stranger, to a foreign house  
And to the childless matron—partner once  
In your calamity, of all her hopes  
Now reft—with bitter anguish will she feel  
In private this misfortune : by what means  
Can I escape her hatred, at your footstool  
When I am seated, but she, still remaining  
A childless consort, with malignant eyes  
The object of your tenderness beholds ?  
Then or, betraying me, will you regard  
Your wife : or by th' esteem for me exprest,  
A dire confusion in your palace cause.  
For men, by female subtlety, how oft  
Have poisons been invented to destroy ;



Yet is my pity to your consort due,  
Childless and hastening to the vale of years ;  
Sprung from heroic sires she ill deserves  
To pine through want of issue. But the face  
Of empire whom we foolishly commend  
Is fair indeed, though in her mansions Grief  
Hath fixed her loathed abode. For who is  
happy,

Who fortunate, when his whole life is spent  
In circumspection and in anxious fears ?  
Rather would I in an ignoble state  
Live blest, than be a monarch who delights .  
In evil friends, and hates the good, still fearing  
The stroke of death. Perhaps you will reply  
That gold can all these obstacles surmount,  
And to grow rich is sweet. I would not hear  
Tumultuous sounds, or grievous toils endure,  
Because these hands my treasures still retain.  
May I possess an humbler rank exempt  
From sorrow ! O my sire, let me describe  
The blessings I have here enjoyed ; first ease,  
To man most grateful ; by the busy crowd  
I seldom was molested, from my path  
No villain drove me : not to be endured  
Is this, when we to base competitors  
Are forced to yield pre-eminence. I prayed  
Fervently to the gods, or ministered  
To mortals, and with those who did rejoice  
I never grieved. Some strangers I dismissed,  
But others came. Hence a new object still  
Did I remain, and each new votary please.  
What men are bound to wish for, even they  
Who with reluctance practise what they ought,  
The laws conspired to aid my natural bent,  
And in the sight of Phoebus made me just.  
These things maturely weighing in my breast,  
I deem my situation here exceeds  
What Athens can bestow. Allow me then  
The privilege of living to myself :  
For 'tis an equal blessing, or to taste  
The splendid gifts of fortune with delight,  
Or in an humbler station rest content.

*Chorus.* Well hast thou spoken : could thy words conduce

To the felicity of those I love !

*Xuthus.* Cease to speak thus, and learn how to be happy :

For on the spot where thee I found, my son  
Will I perform due rites, the social board  
Crown with a public banquet, and slay victims  
In celebration of thy natal day,  
Which with no sacrifice hath yet been graced.  
But now conducting thee, as if a guest  
Entered my doors, thee with a splendid feast  
Will I regale, and to th' Athenian realm  
Lead thee as one who comes to view the land,  
Not as my son ; because I would not grieve  
My consort, who is childless, while myself  
In thee am blest : yet will I seize at length  
Some happy moment, and on her prevail  
To let thee wield my sceptre. By the name  
Of Ion, I accost thee, which best suits  
Th' event that happened, since, as I came forth  
From Phœbus' temple, thou didst meet me first.  
Collecting therefore all thy band of friends,  
Previous to thy departure from the city  
Of Delphi, with the victim ox regale them.  
But I command you, damsels, to conceal  
What I have said : for if ye to my wife  
Disclose it, ye shall die. [Exit XUTHUS.]

*Ion.*

Then will I go :

Yet is there one thing wanting to complete  
My better fortunes : for I cannot live  
With comfort, if I find not her who bore me.  
If I might yet presume to wish for aught,  
O may my mother prove to be a dame  
Of Athens, that from her I may inherit  
Freedom of speech ! For if a stranger come  
Into that city pure from foreign mixture,  
Although he be a denizen in name,  
By servile fear his faltering tongue is tied,  
Nor dares he freely utter what he thinks.

[Exit ION.]

## CHORUS.

## ODE.

## I.

I view the tears which from her eyes shall flow  
 The sorrows that shall rend her breast,  
 Soon as my queen th' unwelcome truth shall know  
 That with an heir her lord is blest,  
 While she forlorn and childless pines.  
 What priest, O Phœbus, chanted thy decrees?  
 Who bore this stripling nurtured in thy shrines?  
 Suspected frauds my soul displease,  
 Unwonted terrors rend my heart,  
 While thou to him unfold'st a blest event.  
 The boy is versed in every treacherous art,  
 To him her choicest gifts hath fortune lent,  
 Reared, base-born alien, in a foreign land.  
 These obvious truths who fails with me to understand?

## II.

Shall we, my friends, to our queen's wounded ear  
 Without the least disguise relate  
 How he proves false who to her soul is dear,  
 Her partner in each change of fate,  
 That lord in whom her hopes were placed?  
 But he is happy now, while she descends  
 Through misery to the vale of years in haste:  
 Disdained by all his virtuous friends  
 Shall Xuthus droop, through fortune's power,  
 To our rich mansions, who a stranger came,  
 Nor duly prized her gift, the royal dower:  
 Perish the traitor to our honoured dame!  
 Ne'er may his incense to the gods ascend!  
 Creusa shall know this. I am our sovereign's friend.

## III.

With his new son th' exulting sire  
 Already to the festive banquet hies,  
 Where steep Parnassus' hills aspire,  
 Whose rocky summits touch the skies,  
 Where Bacchus lifts a blazing pine,  
 And the gay Mænades to join

His midnight dances haste. With footsteps rude  
 Ne'er may this boy intrude  
 Into my city : rather may he die,  
 And quit life's radiant morn :  
 For groaning Athens would with scorn  
 And jealous eyes the alien view,  
 Should Xuthus' fraud such cause for scorn supply.  
 Enough for her that o'er her plain  
 Erst did Erectheus stretch a wide domain,  
 Still be each patriot to his children true.

CREUSA, OLD MAN, CHORUS.

*Creusa.* Thou venerable man, who didst attend  
 Erectheus the deceased, my honoured sire,  
 Now mount the god's oracular abode,  
 That thou my joys, if Phoebus, mighty king,  
 The birth of children shall foretell, mayst share.  
 For surely to be happy with our friends  
 Is most delightful : but (which Heaven forbid !)  
 Should any evil happen, to behold  
 The face of a benignant man is sweet.  
 For though I am thy queen, as thou didst erst  
 Honour my father, in that father's stead  
 I reverence those grey hairs.

*Old Man.* You still retain  
 A courtesy of manners, which, O daughter,  
 Suits your illustrious lineage : you belie not  
 Those first great ancestors from whom you spring,  
 Sons of the teeming earth. O lead me, guide  
 To the prophetic mansion, for to me  
 Th' ascent is steep : but let thy needful aid  
 Support me while with aged steps I move.

*Creusa.* Follow me now, look where thou tread'st.

*Old Man.* These feet  
 Indeed are tardy, but my zeal is swift.

*Creusa.* Lean on thy staff, while up the winding path  
 Thou striv'st to climb.

*Old Man.* 'Tis darkness all, my eyesight  
 So fails me.

*Creusa.* Thou speak'st truth, but let not this  
 Make thee dejected.

*Old Man.* Not with my consent

Thus do I suffer ; but on me, though loth,  
What Heaven inflicts have I no power to heal.

*Creusa.* Ye faithful females, who have served me long,  
Attending at the distaff or the loom,  
What fortunes to my husband were revealed?  
Left he the temple with a blest assurance  
Of children, whom t' obtain we hither came?  
Inform me : for with acceptable tidings  
If ye can greet me, ye will not confer  
Such favour on a mistress who distrusts  
The truth of what ye utter.

*Chorus.* Ruthless fate !

*Creusa.* This prelude to your speech is inauspicious.

*Chorus.* Ah, wretched me ! But wherefore am I wounded  
By oracles that to my lords belong?  
No more ! Why should I venture to relate  
A tale for which my recompense is death?

*Creusa.* What means this plaint, and whence arise your fears?

*Chorus.* Shall we speak out, shall we observe strict silence,  
Or how shall we proceed?

*Creusa.* Tell what you know  
Of the misfortune which invades your queen.

*Chorus.* Yes, thou should'st hear it all, though twofold death  
Awaited me. Ne'er shall those arms sustain,  
Nor to thy bosom shalt thou ever clasp,  
The wished-for progeny.

*Old Man.* Alas, my daughter,  
Would I were dead !

*Creusa.* Wretch that I am ! The woes  
Ye have revealed, my friends, make life a curse.

*Old Man.* We perish, O my daughter !

*Creusa.* Grief, alas !  
Pierces my vitals.

*Old Man.* Those untimely groans  
Suppress.

*Creusa.* My complaints unbidden force their way.

*Old Man.* Before we learn—

*Creusa.* Alas, what farther tidings  
Can I expect?

*Old Man.* Whether our lord endure  
The same, and share your woes, or you alone  
To adverse fortune are exposed.

*Chorus.* On him,  
Thou aged man, Apollo hath bestowed  
A son ; this blessing singly he enjoys  
Without his consort.

*Creusa.* You to me unfold  
The greatest of all evils, an affliction  
Which claims my groans.

*Old Man.* But is the son you speak of  
To spring hereafter from some dame unknown,  
Or did Apollo's oracle declare  
That he is born already ?

*Chorus.* To thy lord  
Phœbus an offspring gives, already born,  
Who hath attained the age of blooming manhood :  
For I was present.

*Creusa.* What is this you say ?  
To me have you related such a tale  
As no tongue ought to utter.

*Old Man.* And to me.

*Creusa.* But by what means, yet undisclosed, the god  
This oracle to its completion brings,  
Inform me more explicitly, and who  
This stripling is.

*Chorus.* Apollo to thy husband  
Gave for a son him whom he first should meet  
As from the temple of the god he came.

*Creusa.* But as for me, alas ! through my whole life  
Accursed and sentenced to a childless state,  
In solitary mansions shall I dwell.  
What youth was by the oracle designed ?  
Whom did the husband of unhappy me  
Meet in his passage—how, or where behold him ?

*Chorus.* Know'st thou that stripling, O my dearest queen,  
Who swept the temple ? He is Xuthus' son.

*Creusa.* Ah, would to Heaven that I could wing my  
flight.

Through the dark air beyond the Grecian land  
To the Hesperian stars ! How great, how great  
Are the afflictions I endure !

*Old Man.* What name  
His father gave him, know you, or is this  
Yet undetermined ?

*Chorus.*

Ion was he called,

Because he first his happy father met.

*Old Man.* Who was his mother?*Chorus.*

That I cannot tell :

But to acquaint thee, O thou aged man,  
 With all that's in my power, her husband went,  
 In privacy to offer up a victim  
 For the discovery, and the natal day  
 Of his new son, and in the hallowed tent  
 With him will celebrate a genial banquet.

*Old Man.* My honoured mistress (for with you I grieve),

We are betrayed by your perfidious lord,  
 Wronged by premeditated fraud, and cast  
 Forth from Erectheus' house : I speak not this  
 Through hatred to your husband, but because  
 I love you more than him, who wedding you  
 When to the city he a stranger came,  
 Your palace too and whole inheritance  
 With you receiving, on some other dame  
 Appears to have begotten sons by stealth :  
 How 'twas by stealth I'll prove ; when he perceived  
 That you were barren, he was not content  
 To share the self-same fate, but on a slave,  
 Whom he embraced in secrecy, begot  
 And to some Delphic matron gave this son,  
 That in a foreign realm he might be nurtured :  
 He, to the temple of Apollo sent,  
 Is here trained up in secret. But the sire,  
 Soon as he knew the stripling had attained  
 The years of manhood, hath on you prevailed  
 Hither to come, because you had no child.  
 The god indeed hath spoken truth ; not so  
 Xuthus, who from his infancy hath reared  
 The boy, and forged these tales ; that, if detected,  
 His crimes might be imputed to the god :  
 But coming hither, and by length of time  
 Hoping to screen the fraud, he now resolves  
 He will transfer the sceptre to this stripling,  
 For whom at length he forges the new name  
 Of Ion, to denote that he went forth  
 And met him. Ah, how do I ever hate  
 Those wicked men who plot unrighteous deeds,

And then adorn them with delusive art !  
 Rather would I possess a virtuous friend  
 Of mean abilities, than one more wise  
 And profligate. Of all disastrous fates  
 Yours is the worst, who to your house admit  
 Its future lord, whose mother is unknown,  
 A youth selected from th' ignoble crowd,  
 The base-born issue of some female slave.  
 For this had only been a single ill  
 Had he persuaded you, since you are childless,  
 T' adopt, and in your palace lodged the son  
 Of some illustrious dame : but if to you  
 This scheme had been disgustful, from the kindred  
 Of Æolus his sire should he have sought  
 Another consort. Hence is it incumbent  
 On you to execute some great revenge  
 Worthy of woman : with the lifted sword,  
 Or by some stratagem or deadly poison,  
 Your husband and his offspring to dispatch  
 Ere you by them are murdered : you will lose  
 Your life if you delay, for when two foes  
 Meet in one house some mischief must befall,  
 Or this or that. I therefore will with you  
 Partake the danger, and with you conspire  
 To slay that stripling, entering the abode  
 Where for the sumptuous banquet he is making  
 Th' accustomed preparation. While I view  
 The sun, and e'en in death, will I repay  
 The bounty of those lords who nurtured me.  
 For there is one thing only which confers  
 Disgrace on slaves—the name ; in all beside  
 No virtuous slave to freeborn spirits yields.

*Chorus.* I too, O my dear mistress, am resolved  
 To be the steadfast partner of your fate  
 And die with glory, or with glory live.

*Creusa.* How, O my tortured soul, shall I be silent ?  
 But rather how these hidden loves disclose ?  
 Shall I shake off all shame ? for what retards  
 My farther progress ? To how dire a struggle  
 Doth my beleaguered virtue lie exposed ?  
 Hath not my lord betrayed me ? For of house  
 And children too am I deprived. All hopes



Are vanished now of which I fondly sought  
I' avail myself, but could not, by concealing  
The loss of my virginity, those throes  
Concealing which I ever must bewail.  
But by the starry throne of Jove, the goddess  
Who haunts my rocks, and by the sacred banks  
Of Triton's lake, whose waters never fail,  
I my disgrace no longer will suppress,  
For, having cleansed my soul from that pollution  
I shall have shaken off a load of cares.  
My eyes drop tears, and sorrow rends my soul—  
Assailed with treachery both by men and gods,  
Whom I will prove to have been false, devoid  
Of gratitude to those they loved. O thou,  
Whose skilful hand attunes the sevenfold chords  
Of the melodious lyre, from lifeless shells  
Eliciting the Muses' sweetest strains,  
Son of Latona, I this day will publish  
A tale to thee disgraceful: for thou cam'st,  
Thou cam'st resplendent with thy golden hair,  
As I the crocus gathered, in my robe  
Each vivid flower assembling to compose  
Garlands of fragrance: thou my snowy wrist  
Didst seize and drag me to the cave, with shrieks  
While to my mother for her aid I cried:  
'Twas impudently done, thou lustful god,  
To gain the favour of the Cyprian queen.  
In evil hour, to thee I bore a son,  
Whom, fearful of my mother's wrath, I cast  
Into that cave, where thou with wretched me  
Didst join thyself in luckless love. Alas!  
Now is our miserable son no more,  
On him have vultures feasted. But meanwhile  
Thy festive Pæans to the sounding harp  
Dost thou repeat. O offspring of Latona,  
To thee I speak, who from thy golden tripod  
Dost in this centre of the world dispense  
Thy oracles. My voice shall reach thy ears,  
O thou false paramour, who, from my lord  
Though thou no favours ever didst receive,  
A son into his mansions hast conveyed:  
Meanwhile the offspring whom to thee I bore

Hath died unnoticed, by the vultures torn ;  
 Lost are the bandages in which his mother  
 Had wrapped him. Thee thy Delos doth abhor,  
 The branches of whose laurel rise to meet  
 The palm, and form that shade, where thee her son  
 With arms divine Latona first embraced.

*Chorus.* Ah me ! How inexhaustible a source  
 Of woes is opened, such as must draw tears  
 From every eye.

*Old Man.* O daughter, on your face,  
 Still with unsated rapture do I gaze,  
 My reason have I lost : for, while I strive  
 From my o'erburdened spirit to discharge  
 The waves of woe, fresh torrents at the poop  
 Rush in and overwhelm me, since the words  
 Which you have uttered, from your present ills  
 Digressing to the melancholy track  
 Of other sufferings. What is it you say ?  
 What charge would you allege against Apollo ?  
 What son is this whom you assert you bore ?  
 And in what quarter of your native city  
 To beasts did you expose him for a prey ?  
 To me repeat the tale.

*Creusa.* Thou aged man,  
 Thy presence makes me blush : yet will I speak.

*Old Man.* Full well do I know how to sympathise  
 With my afflicted friends.

*Creusa.* Then hear my tale.  
 Thou must remember, on the northern side  
 Of the Cecropian rock, the cave called Macra.

*Old Man.* I know it ; on that spot Pan's temple stands,  
 And near it blaze his altars.

*Creusa.* 'Twas the scene  
 Of my unhappy conflict.

*Old Man.* Say, what conflict ?  
 Your history makes me weep.

*Creusa.* The amorous god  
 Apollo held me in a forced embrace.

*Old Man.* Was this, my daughter, then, what I perceived ?

*Creusa.* I know not ; but will openly declare  
 The truth, if thy conjectures light on it.

*Old Man.* When you in silence wailed some hidden woe ?

*Creusa.* Those evils happened then which I to thee  
Without disguise reveal.

*Old Man.* But by what means  
Your union with Apollo did you hide?

*Creusa.* I bore a son—with patience hear me speak,  
O venerable man.

*Old Man.* Where? Who performed  
Th' obstetric part? Did you alone endure  
The grievous throes of childbirth?

*Creusa.* All alone  
Within that cave where I my honour lost.

*Old Man.* But where's the boy, that in this childless state  
Thou mayst remain no longer?

*Creusa.* He is dead,  
Old man; to beasts was he exposed.

*Old Man.* How! Dead!  
Was Phœbus then so base as not to aid you?

*Creusa.* No aid he gave: but in the dreary house  
Of Pluto is our hapless offspring nurtured.

*Old Man.* But who exposed him? Sure it was not you?

*Creusa.* I in the midnight gloom around him wrapped  
A mantle.

*Old Man.* To th' exposure of your son  
Was no man privy?

*Creusa.* I had no accomplice  
But secrecy with evil fortune leagued.

*Old Man.* And how could you endure to leave the child  
Within that cavern?

*Creusa.* How? These lips did utter  
Full many piteous words.

*Old Man.* The cruelty  
Which you here showed was dreadful: but the  
god  
Than you was still more cruel.

*Creusa.* Had you seen  
The child stretch forth his suppliant hands to me—

*Old Man.* Sought he the fostering breast, or to recline  
In your maternal arms?

*Creusa.* Hence torn he suffered  
From me foul wrong.

*Old Man.* But whence could such a thought  
Enter your soul as to expose your son?

*Creusa.* Because I hoped Apollo, who begot,  
Would save him.

*Old Man.* Ah, what storms have overwhelmed  
The fortunes of your house !

*Creusa.* Why, covering up  
Thy head, thus weep'st thou, O thou aged man ?

*Old Man.* Because I see you and your father wretched.

*Creusa.* Such is the doom of frail mortality :  
Nought rests in the same state.

*Old Man.* But let us dwell  
No more, O daughter, on the piteous theme.

*Creusa.* What must I do ? The wretched can devise  
No wholesome counsel.

*Old Man.* On the god who wronged you  
First wreak your vengeance.

*Creusa.* How can I a mortal  
O'ercome the potent deities ?

*Old Man.* Set fire  
To Phœbus' awful temple.

*Creusa.* Fear restrains me,  
And I endure sufficient woes already.

*Old Man.* Dare then to do what's feasible, to kill  
Your husband.

*Creusa.* I revere the nuptial bed,  
For when I first espoused the noble Xuthus,  
My lord was virtuous.

*Old Man.* Slay at least this boy,  
Who is produced your interest to oppose.

*Creusa.* Ah, by what means ? How greatly should I wish  
This done, if it were possible.

*Old Man.* By arming  
With swords your followers.

*Creusa.* I will go : but where  
Shall this be executed ?

*Old Man.* In the tent  
Where with a banquet he regales his friends.

*Creusa.* This were a public outrage, and my band  
Of followers is but weak.

*Old Man.* Alas ! your courage  
Deserts you : forge yourself some better scheme.

*Creusa.* I too have schemes both subtle and effective.

*Old Man.* In both will I assist you.

- Creusa.* Hear me then :  
Full well thou know'st the history of that war  
Waged by earth's brood.
- Old Man.* Against the gods I know  
The giants fought on the Phlægean plain.
- Creusa.* There earth produced the Gorgon, dreadful  
monster.
- Old Man.* To aid her sons in battle, and contend  
With the immortal powers.
- Creusa.* E'en so, and Pallas,  
Daughter of Jove, the virgin goddess, slew  
This prodigy.
- Old Man.* But by what horrid form  
Was it distinguished ?
- Creusa.* Hissing serpents twined  
Around its chest.
- Old Man.* Is this the tale I heard  
In days of yore ?
- Creusa.* That Pallas wears its hide  
To guard her bosom.
- Old Man.* Which they call the Ægis,  
The garment of Minerva.
- Creusa.* It obtained.  
This name, amidst the combat of the gods  
When she advanced.
- Old Man.* But how can this, O daughter,  
Destroy your foes ?
- Creusa.* Old man, art thou acquainted  
With Ericthonius, or an utter stranger  
To his whole history ?
- Old Man.* Him whom earth brought forth,  
The founder of your race.
- Creusa.* Minerva gave  
To him when newly born—
- Old Man.* Gave what ? You speak  
With hesitation.
- Creusa.* Of the Gorgon's blood  
Two drops.
- Old Man.* On mortals what effect have these ?
- Creusa.* The one produces death, the other heals  
Each malady.
- Old Man.* In what were they contained ?

Did Pallas to the body of the child  
Affix them ?

*Creusa.* To his golden bandages :  
He gave them to my sire.

*Old Man.* But when he died,  
Did they devolve to you ?

*Creusa.* To me they came,  
And them e'en now around my wrists I wear.

*Old Man.* But of what wondrous qualities, O say,  
Consists this twofold present of the goddess ?

*Creusa.* That blood which issued from the monster's vein.

*Old Man.* What is the use of this ? and with what virtues  
Is it endued ?

*Creusa.* Diseases it repels,  
And nourishes man's life.

*Old Man.* But what effect  
Arises from the second drop you speak of ?

*Creusa.* Inevitable death : for 'tis the venom  
Of serpents which around the Gorgon twine.

*Old Man.* These drops together mingled, do you bring,  
Or separate ?

*Creusa.* Separate. For with evil good  
Ought not to be confounded.

*Old Man.* You possess,  
My dearest daughter, all that you can need.

*Creusa.* By this the boy must die : but to dispatch him  
Shall be your office.

*Old Man.* Where and by what means  
Can I dispatch him ? It is yours to speak,  
But mine to execute.

*Creusa.* When at my house  
In Athens he arrives.

*Old Man.* In this you speak  
Unwisely ; for you treat with scorn my counsels.

*Creusa.* What mean'st thou ? Hast thou formed the same  
suspicions

Which have just entered my misgiving soul ?

*Old Man.* Although this boy you slay not, you will seem  
To have contrived his death.

*Creusa.* 'Tis well observed :  
For every tongue asserts that stepdames envy  
Their husband's children.

*Old Man.* Kill him, therefore, here ;  
 You then will be enabled to deny  
 That by your means he perished.

*Creusa.* Ere it comes,  
 I that blest hour anticipate.

*Old Man.* Your husband  
 Will you deceive e'en in that very point  
 In which he strives t' o'erreach you.

*Creusa.* Know'st thou then  
 How to proceed ? This ancient golden vase  
 Wrought by Minerva, at my hand receiving,  
 Go where my lord in secret offers up  
 His victims ; when the banquet is concluded,  
 And they prepare to pour forth to the gods  
 The rich libation, by thy robe concealed  
 Infuse into the goblet of the youth  
 Its venomous contents ; for him alone,  
 Who in my house hereafter hopes to reign,  
 A separate draught, but not designed for all.  
 Should he once swallow this, he ne'er will reach  
 The famed Athenian gates, but here remain  
 A breathless corse.

*Old Man.* This mansion, for the purpose  
 Of public hospitality designed,  
 Now enter : I meanwhile will execute  
 The business I'm employed in. Aged feet  
 Grow young again by action, though past time  
 Can ne'er be measured back. Attend, my queen !  
 Bear me to him I hate, aid me to slay  
 And drag him forth from the polluted temple !  
 For in their prosperous fortunes men are bound  
 To be religious ; but no law obstructs  
 His progress who resolves to smite his foes.  
 [Exeunt CREUSA and OLD MAN.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

O Trivia, Ceres' daughter, who presid'st  
 O'er the nocturnal passenger,  
 And him by day who travels ; if thou guid'st

Th' envenomed cup, it shall not err  
 Before it reach the destined lip  
 Of him to whom my venerable queen  
 Sends the Gorgon's blood to sip,  
 Who treacherously intruding would debase  
 Her ancestors' imperial race.  
 No alien's brood in Athens shall be seen ;  
 The city where Erectheus filled the throne  
 Shall still be ruled by his posterity alone.

I. 2.

But if in vain to slay the foe she tries,  
 Should fortune too desert my queen,  
 And hope which now promotes the bold emprise ;  
 The biting falchion's edge I ween,  
 Or, twined around her neck, the noose,  
 Will finish these accumulated woes.  
 Then the flitting spirit, loose  
 From earthly gyves, in other forms shall live.  
 For she will never tamely give  
 Consent, that he, to foreign realms who owes  
 His birth, shall seize the palace of her sires :  
 Hence from her vivid eyes thick flash indignant fires.

II. I.

Shame for that injured god I feel  
 To whom the muse awakes her varied strain,  
 Intruding with officious zeal,  
 Around Callichore's famed spring,  
 On the moon's twentieth eve, should he profane  
 The kindled torches, and his tribute bring,  
 A' sleepless votary, mingling with his train,  
 When in the dance the starry sky  
 Of Jove, with the resplendent moon, unites,  
 And fifty maids, the progeny  
 Of Nereus, sport midst ocean's rapid tide,  
 Or where exhaustless rivers glide,  
 To Proserpine and Cere's mystic rites  
 Yielding due homage : from the Delphic fane,  
 Yet theſe this vagrant hopes to reign,  
 And satiate his rapacious soul's desire  
 With wealth, which others' toils acquire.



## II. 2.

Ye bards who crowd each hostile page  
 With tales of wives beguiled by lawless love,  
 And war with feeble woman wage,  
 View with impartial eye our deeds,  
 And listen for a moment while I prove  
 How greatly female chastity exceeds  
 Man, whom unbridled passions prompt to rove.  
 Oft have rude songs profaned our name,  
 Now let the muse man's haughty sex assail,  
 And publish deeds replete with shame.  
 For he who from Jove's sons derives his birth  
 Is void of gratitude and worth,  
 Nought could the throne his consort gave avail  
 To make the nuptial bed his scene of joy :  
 He hath obtained this spurious boy,  
 By the seducing wiles of Venus led  
 To some ignoble damsel's bed.

## SERVANT, CHORUS.

*Servant.* Where, O ye noble matrons, shall I find  
 My queen, Erectheus' daughter? For in quest  
 Of her through the whole city have I ranged,  
 But cannot meet with her.

*Chorus.* O thou who tend'st  
 On the same lords with me, what fresh event  
 Hath happened—wherefore mov'st thou with such  
 speed?

And what important tidings dost thou bring?

*Servant.* We are pursued : the rulers of this land  
 Search after her, resolved that she shall die,  
 Thrown headlong from the rock.

*Chorus.* Ah me ! what sayst thou ?  
 Could we not then conceal our scheme of slaying  
 The boy ?

*Servant.* We are detected, and her danger  
 Is now most imminent.

*Chorus.* But by what means  
 Were these our hidden stratagems brought forth  
 To public view ?

*Servant.* The god hath found injustice

Too weak to cope with justice, nor allows  
His shrine to be polluted.

*Chorus.*

I entreat thee

Say how this happened : for when we have heard  
Whether our doom be death, we shall die gladly,  
Or, if we live, with pleasure view the sun.

*Servant.* When from the god's oracular abode  
With his new son Creusa's husband went  
To hold a feast, and for th' immortal powers  
Prepared oblations, Xuthus sought the hill  
Whence Bacchus' flames burst forth, that he might  
sprinkle

Parnassus' cloven summit with the blood  
Of slaughtered victims, celebrating thus  
The blest discovery of his long-lost son,  
Whom thus the sire accosted : " Here remain,  
And bid the builders labour to erect  
Such tent as shall enclose an ample space  
On every side : but when I to those gods  
Who bless the natal hour have sacrificed,  
If I stay long, before thy friends who here  
Are present, place the genial feast." Then taking  
The heifers, he departed. But the youth,  
Attentive to his pious task, on columns  
Erected the light roof, to which no walls  
Lent their support ; he guarded it with care,  
Both from the flaming sun's meridian rays,  
And from the western aspect ; then the sides  
An acre each in length did he extend,  
With equal angles ; in the central space  
Was there an area, each of the four sides  
Its length extended to six hundred feet,  
A perfect square, which skilful artists say  
Was calculated well to entertain  
All Delphi at the feast ; the sacred tapestry  
Then taking from the treasures of the god,  
He covered o'er the whole—a wondrous sight  
To all beholders. First he o'er the roof  
Threw robes, which Hercules, the son of Jove,  
To Phœbus at his temple brought, the spoils  
Of vanquished Amazons, a votive gift,  
On which these pictures by the loom were wrought :

Heaven, in its vast circumference all the stars  
Assembling ; there his coursers, too, the sun  
Impetuous drove, till ceased his waning flame,  
And with him drew in his resplendent train  
Vesper's clear light ; but, clad in sable garb,  
Night hastened onward, with her chariot drawn  
By steeds unyoked ; the stars accompanied  
Their goddess ; through mid-air the Pleiades,  
And, with his falchion, armed Orion moved ;  
But placed on high, around the Northern Pole,  
The Bear, in an averted posture, turned ;  
Then full-orbed Cynthia, who the months divides,  
Darted her splendour from the realms above ;  
Next came the Hyades, a sign well known  
To sailors, and Aurora's dawning light,  
The stars dispelling. But the sides he covered  
With yet more tapestry : the Barbaric fleet  
To that of Greece opposed was there displayed :  
Followed a monstrous brood, half horse, half man,  
The Thracian monarch's furious steeds subdued,  
And lion of Nemæa ; at the gate  
Close to his daughters Cecrops rolled along  
On scaly folds ; this was a votive gift  
From some Athenian citizen unknown.  
He in the centre of the festive board  
Placed golden cups. An aged herald went  
On tiptoe, and each citizen of Delphi  
Invited to attend the sumptuous feast.  
They, crowned with garlands, when the tent was filled,  
Indulged their genius. After the delight  
Of the repast was o'er, an aged man,  
Into the midst advancing, took his stand,  
And from the guests by his officious zeal  
Provoked abundant laughter : from huge urns  
He poured the water forth to lave their hands,  
And scattered all around from blazing myrrh  
A rich perfume, over the golden cups  
Presiding, and assuming to himself  
That office. But at length, when the shrill pipe  
Uttered its notes harmonious, and the wine  
Again went round, the jovial veteran cried :  
"These smaller cups remove, and in their stead

Large goblets bring, that all may cheer their souls  
More expeditiously." Then toiled the servants  
Beneath the silver vessels which they bore,  
And golden beakers by the sculptor wrought :  
But he, selecting one of choicest mould,  
As if he only meant to show respect  
To his young lord, presented it filled high  
Up to the brim, infusing midst the wine  
A deadly poison, which 'tis said his queen  
Gave him, that the new offspring of her lord  
Might perish, but without its being known  
To any man what caused the stripling's death.  
While he, whom Xuthus has declared his son,  
Surrounded by his comrades, in his hands  
Held the libation, some reproachful word  
Was uttered by a servant, which the youth,  
Who had received his nurture in the fane  
And midst experienced prophets, thought an omen  
Most unpropitious, and another goblet  
Commanded to be filled : but, on the ground,  
As a libation to the Delphic god,  
Poured forth the first, and bade his comrades follow  
Th' example which he gave. A general silence  
Succeeded : we the holy goblets filled  
With water and with Biblian wine. While thus  
We were employed, there flew into the tent  
A flock of doves (for they beneath the roof  
Of Phœbus dwell secure) ; but of the wine  
When they had tasted, after they had dipped  
Their beaks, which thirsted for the luscious draught,  
And the rich beverage down their feathered throats  
Quaffed eagerly, innoxious did it prove  
To all beside, but she, who on the spot  
Had settled where the new-discovered stripling  
Poured his libation down, no sooner tasted  
The liquor, than she shook her wings, cried out  
With a shrill plaintive voice, and, groaning, uttered  
Notes unintelligible. Every guest  
The struggles of the dove amazed ; she died  
Torn with convulsions, and her purple feet  
Now loosed their hold. But at the social board,  
He whom the oracle declared the son

Of Xuthus, rent his garments, bared his breast,  
And cried, "What miscreant strove to slay me.

Speak,

Old man, for this officious zeal was thine,  
And from thy hand the goblet I received."  
Then with impetuous grasp his aged arm  
He caught, and questioned him, that in the fact  
Of bearing venomed drugs he might detect him.  
Hence was the truth laid open; through constraint,  
At length did he reluctantly declare  
Creusa's guilt, and how her heart contrived  
The scheme of minist'ring th' envenomed draught.  
Forth from the banquet with his comrades rushed  
The youth, whom Phœbus' oracles pronounced  
To be the son of Xuthus. Standing up  
Among the Pythian nobles, thus he spoke:  
"O sacred land, the daughter of Erectheus,  
A foreign dame, would take away my life  
By poison." Delphi's rulers have decreed  
My queen shall be thrown headlong from the rock,  
Nor hath one single voice, but the consent  
Of all, adjudged her death, because she strove,  
E'en in the temple, to have slain the priest.  
Pursued by the whole city, hither bend  
Her inauspicious steps. She through a wish  
For children to Apollo came: but now  
She perishes with all her hoped-for race.

[Exit SERVANT.]

*Chorus.* No means are left for wretched me  
The ruthless hand of death to 'scape;  
For all too plainly see,  
Mixt with the purple juices of the grape,  
The baleful drops of viper's blood:  
'Tis manifest what victims were designed  
To cross the dreary Stygian flood.  
My life is doomed to close in woe,  
At me huge rocky fragments will they throw.  
How, O my royal mistress, shall I find  
Pinions to speed my rapid flight?  
How shall I penetrate earth's inmost womb,  
And in the realms of night  
Avoid this miserable doom;

Avoid the stones which vengeance hurls around,  
 When at our heads she aims the wound?  
 Shall I the fleetest steed ascend,  
 Or the tall prow which cleaves the billowy main?  
 No heart can hide so foul a stain,  
 Unless some god his sheltering aid extend.  
 How sorely, O my wretched queen,  
 Will thy tortured spirit grieve!  
 And shall not we, who have been seen  
 Striving to work another's bane,  
 The woes we would inflict, receive,  
 As justice doth ordain?

CREUSA, CHORUS.

*Creusa.* My faithful followers, they pursue my flight,  
 Resolved to slay me; by the public vote  
 Of all the Pythian citizens condemned,  
 I shall be yielded up.

*Chorus.* We are no strangers  
 To thy calamities; mayst thou escape,  
 Favoured by fortune!

*Creusa.* Whither shall I fly?  
 These feet were hardly swift enough t' outstrip,  
 Impending death: but from my foes escaped,  
 By stealth I come.

*Chorus.* What shelter canst thou need  
 More than these altars furnish?

*Creusa.* How can they  
 Avail me?

*Chorus.* 'Tis unlawful to destroy  
 The suppliant.

*Creusa.* But the law hath sentenced me  
 To perish.

*Chorus.* Had'st thou by their hands been caught.

*Creusa.* But the relentless ministers of vengeance,  
 Armed with drawn swords, haste hither.

*Chorus.* Take thy seat  
 Close to the altar, for if there thou die,  
 Thy blood will on thy murderers fix a stain  
 That ne'er can be effaced. But we with patience  
 Are bound to suffer what the Fates inflict.

## ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

*Ion.* Cēphisus, O thou awful sire, who bear'st  
 The semblance of a bull, what viper's this  
 Thou hast begotten, or what dragon darting  
 Flames most consuming from her murderous eyes !  
 She with unbounded boldness is endued,  
 And pestilent as those envenomed drops  
 Of Gorgon's blood with which she sought to kill me.  
 Seize her ! Parnassus' rocks shall tear away  
 The graceful ringlets of her streaming hair,  
 When headlong from its summit she is thrown.  
 Me hath propitious fortune here detained,  
 Else to th' Athenian city had I gone,  
 And fallen into a cruel step-dame's snares,  
 But while I yet among my friends remain,  
 Thy heart have I explored, how great a pest  
 And foe thou art to me, for at thy doors  
 Hadst thou received me, thou to Pluto's realm  
 Would'st instantly have hurled me down. Behold  
 The sorceress, what a complicated scene  
 Of treachery hath she framed, yet trembles not  
 The altar of Apollo to approach,  
 As if Heaven's vengeance could not reach her crimes.  
 But neither shall this altar nor the temple  
 Of Phœbus save thy life : for the compassion  
 Thou wouldst excite is rather due to me  
 And to my mother ; for although, in person,  
 She be not here, yet is that much-loved name  
 Ne'er absent from my thoughts.

*Creusa.* To spare my life  
 In my own name I warn you, and in that  
 Of the vindictive god before whose altar  
 We stand.

*Ion.* But what hast thou to do with Phœbus ?

*Creusa.* Myself I to the Delphic god devote.

*Ion.* Though thou his priest by poison wouldst have slain.

*Creusa.* Phœbus in you had at that time no right,  
 Because you were your father's.

*Ion.* I was once  
 Apollo's, and still call myself his son.

*Creusa.* To him indeed you formerly belonged,

But now am I his votary, and no claim  
Have you to such a title.

*Ion.* Thy behaviour  
Is impious, mine was pious erst.

*Creusa.* I sought  
To take away the life of you, a foe  
To me and to my house.

*Ion.* Did I with arms  
Invade thy country?

*Creusa.* Yes, and you have fired  
The mansions of Erectheus.

*Ion.* With what brands,  
What flames?

*Creusa.* You in my palace would have dwelt,  
Seizing it 'gainst my will.

*Ion.* My sire bestowing  
On me the realm his valour had obtained

*Creusa.* But by what claim rule Æolus' race  
Over Minerva's city?

*Ion.* With his sword  
He rescued it, and not with empty words.

*Creusa.* He was but an ally, nor was that land  
His proper residence.

*Ion.* Through the mere dread  
Of what might happen, wouldst thou then have slain  
me?

*Creusa.* Lest I should perish if your life were spared.

*Ion.* With envy art thou stung, because my sire  
Discovered me, while thou remain'st yet childless.

*Creusa.* Would you invade the childless matron's house?

*Ion.* But have not I some title to a share  
Of my sire's wealth?

*Creusa.* A shield and spear are all  
Your father had, and all that you can claim.

*Ion.* Leave Phœbus' altar and this hallowed seat.

*Creusa.* Where'er she dwell, to your own mother give  
Such admonitions.

*Ion.* Shalt thou 'scape unpunished  
For thy attempt to slay me?

*Creusa.* If you mean  
To take away my life, let it be here  
Within this temple.



- Ion.* What delight to thee  
Can it afford, amid the votive wreaths  
Of Phœbus to expire?
- Creusa.* I shall afflict  
One by whom I have greatly been afflicted.
- Ion.* Oh! 'tis most wondrous how, for man t' observe,  
The deity such laws as are not good  
Or prudent hath enacted. For th' unjust  
Before their altars ought to find no seat,  
But thence to be expelled; for 'tis not fit  
The statues of the gods by impious hands  
Should be profaned; but every virtuous man  
Who is oppressed ought to find shelter there.  
Yet is it most unseemly for the just  
And the unjust, when here they meet together,  
T' experience the same treatment from the gods.

PYTHIAN PRIESTESS, ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

- Pythian Pr.* Refrain thy rage, my son; for I the priestess  
Of Phœbus, who the tripod's ancient rites  
Maintain, selected from the Delphic maids,  
Leave his oracular abode and pass  
This consecrated threshold.
- Ion.* Hail, dear mother.  
Although you bore me not.
- Pythian Pr.* Yet call me such.  
That name is not ungrateful.
- Ion.* Have you heard  
The stratagems she formed to murder me?
- Pythian Pr.* I heard them; and thou also hast transgressed  
Through cruelty.
- Ion.* How? Can it be unjust,  
Those who would slay me, to reward with death?
- Pythian Pr.* Wives with inveterate hatred ever view  
Their husbands' sons sprung from another bed.
- Ion.* And we who have by them been greatly wronged,  
Abhor those step-dames.
- Pythian Pr.* Banish from thy soul  
This rancour, now the temple thou art leaving,  
And on thy journey to thy native land.
- Ion.* How then would you advise me to proceed?

*Pythian Pr.* Go unpolluted to th' Athenian realm  
With prosperous omens.

*Ion.* Sure the man who slays  
His foes is unpolluted.

*Pythian Pr.* Act not thus :  
But with attentive ear receive my counsels.

*Ion.* O speak : for your benevolence to me  
Will dictate all you utter.

*Pythian Pr.* Dost thou see  
The chest beneath my arm ?

*Ion.* An ancient chest,  
With garlands decked, I see.

*Pythian Pr.* In this, thee erst  
A new-born infant, I received.

*Ion.* What mean you ?  
A fresh discovery opens.

*Pythian Pr.* I have kept  
These tokens secret ; but display them now.

*Ion.* How could you hide them such a length of time  
As since you took me up ?

*Pythian Pr.* The god required  
Thy service in his temple.

*Ion.* Doth he now  
No longer need it ? Who this doubt will solve ?

*Pythian Pr.* By pointing out thy sire, he from these realms  
Dismisses thee.

*Ion.* But is it by command,  
Or from what motive, that this chest you keep ?

*Pythian Pr.* Apollo's self inspired me with the thought—

*Ion.* Of doing what ? O speak ! Conclude your tale.

*Pythian Pr.* With care preserving to the present time  
What I had found.

*Ion.* But how can this to me  
Cause either gain or damage ?

*Pythian Pr.* Know'st thou not,  
That round thee close these fillets were entwined ?

*Ion.* What you produce may aid me in th' attempt  
To find my mother.

*Pythian Pr.* With the god's consent,  
Which he did erst withhold.

*Ion.* O day, that bring'st  
Blest visions to delight these wondering eyes !

*Pythian Pr.* Observe these hints, and diligently search  
 For her who bore thee: traversing all Asia,  
 And Europe's farthest limits, thou shalt know  
 The truth of what I speak. Thee, O my son,  
 I nurtured, through a reverence for the god,  
 And here surrender to thy hands the pledges  
 Which 'twas his will I should receive and keep,  
 Though not commanded: but I cannot tell  
 What motive swayed him. For, that I possessed  
 These tokens, was by no man known, or where  
 They were concealed. Farewell, my love for thee  
 Is equal to a mother's. With these questions  
 Thou shouldst commence thy search for her who  
 bore thee;

First, whether she was any nymph of Delphi,  
 Who thee, the burden of her womb, exposed  
 Here in this fane; but be thy next inquiry,  
 If any Grecian dame. For thou deriv'st  
 All the advantages thou hast, from me,  
 And from Apollo, who in this event  
 Hath been concerned.

*Ion.* Alas! what plenteous tears  
 Steal from these eyes, while shuddering I revolve  
 How she who bore me, having erst indulged  
 A secret passion, did by stealth expose,  
 Nor at her breast sustain me: but unknown  
 I in the temple of Apollo led  
 A servile life. The god indeed was kind,  
 But fortune harsh: for at the very time  
 When in maternal arms I should have sported,  
 And tasted somewhat of the joys of life,  
 I of my dearest mother's fostering care  
 Was cruelly deprived. She from whose womb  
 I sprung is wretched too; she hath endured  
 The self-same pangs with me, and lost the bliss  
 She might have hoped for from the son she bore.  
 But now this ancient coffer will I take  
 And carry for a present to the god;  
 O may I hence discover nought to blast  
 My wishes! For if haply she who bore me  
 Should prove some slave, it were a greater evil  
 To find my mother than to let her rest

In silence. I this votive gift, O Phœbus,  
Lodge in thy fane. But what presumptuous deed !  
Oppose I the benignant god who saved  
These tokens to assist me in discovering  
My mother ? I am bound to ope the lid,  
And act with courage : for what fate ordains  
I ne'er can supersede. Why were ye hidden  
From me, O sacred wreaths and bandages  
In which I was preserved ? This orbéd chest,  
Behold, how by some counsel of the god  
It hath been freed from the effects of age ;  
Still is its wicker substance undecayed,  
Although the time which intervened was long  
For such a store to last.

*Creusa.* Ah me ! What vision  
Most unexpected do I see ?

*Chorus.* Thou oft  
Didst heretofore know when thou shouldst be silent.

*Creusa.* My situation now no more admits  
Of silence : cease these counsels ; for I view  
The chest in which I, O my son, exposed you,  
While yet a tender infant, in the cave  
Of Cecrops midst th' encircling rocks of Macra.  
I therefore from this altar will depart,  
Though death should be the consequence.

*Ion.* O seize her ;  
For she, with frenzy smitten by the god,  
Leaps from the hallowed altar : bind her arms.

*Creusa.* The execution of your bloody purpose  
Suspend not : for this chest, and you, and all  
The hidden relics it contains of yours,  
My son, will I hold fast.

*Ion.* Are not these arts  
Most dreadful ? With what specious words e'en  
now  
She claims me for a pledge !

*Creusa.* Not thus : but you,  
Whom they hold dear, are by your friends discovered.

*Ion.* Am I a friend of thine, and yet in secret  
Wouldst thou have murdered me ?

*Creusa.* Yea, and my son ;  
A name to both thy parents ever dear.

*Ion.* Cease to contrive these fraudulent stratagems ;

For I will clearly prove that thou art guilty.

*Creusa.* Ah, would to Heaven that I could reach the mark  
At which I aim my shaft !

*Ion.* Is that chest empty,  
Or filled with hidden stores ?

*Creusa.* Here are the garment  
In which I erst exposed you.

*Ion.* Canst thou tell  
What name they bear before thine eyes behold  
them ?

*Creusa.* If I aright describe them not, to die  
Will I be nothing loth.

*Ion.* Speak ; for thy boldness  
Is somewhat wonderful.

*Creusa.* Observe the robe  
Which erst I wove, when yet a maid.

*Ion.* What sort  
Of garment is it ? for the virgins' loom  
Produces various woofs.

*Creusa.* Not yet complete ;  
The sketch bespeaks a learner.

*Ion.* In what form,  
That here thou mayst not take me unawares ?

*Creusa.* The Gorgon fills the centre of that vest.

*Ion.* O Jove, what fate pursues me !

*Creusa.* And the margin  
With serpents is encompassed like the Ægis.

*Ion.* Lo ! this is the same garment. We have made  
Such a complete discovery as resembles  
The oracles of Heaven.

*Creusa.* O woof which erst  
My virgin-shuttle wrought.

*Ion.* Canst thou produce  
Aught else, or in this evidence alone  
Art thou successful ?

*Creusa.* In a style antique  
Dragons with golden cheeks, Minerva's gift,  
Who bids us rear our children 'mong such forms,  
In imitation of our ancestor  
Great Ericthonius.

*Ion.* What is their effect,



*Ion.* 'Twas the god's doing. But may prosperous fortune  
Be ours through the remainder of our lives,  
Which have been wretched hitherto.

*Creusa.* My son,  
Not without tears were you brought forth ; your mother  
'Midst bitter lamentations from her arms  
Cast you to earth : but now, while to your cheeks  
I press my lips, again I breathe, I taste  
The most ecstatic pleasures.

*Ion.* What thou sayst  
May to us both with justice be applied.

*Creusa.* No longer am I left without an heir,  
No longer childless ; my paternal house  
Acquires new strength, and the Athenian realm  
Hath yet its native monarchs. E'en Erectheus  
Grows young again, nor shall our earth-born race  
Be covered with the shades of night, but view  
The sun's resplendent beams.

*Ion.* But, O my mother,  
Since my sire too is present, let him share  
The transports I to thee have given.

*Creusa.* What words  
Are these which you have uttered, O my son ?

*Ion.* Who proves to be the author of my birth.

*Creusa.* Why speak of this ? For from another sire  
You spring, and not from Xuthus.

*Ion.* Me, alas !  
In thy unwedded state, a spurious child,  
Thou then didst bear.

*Creusa.* Nor yet had Hymen waved  
For me his torch, or led the choral dance,  
When, O my dearest son, for you I felt  
A mother's throes.

*Ion.* From what ignoble race  
Am I descended ?

*Creusa.* Witness she who slew  
The Gorgon.

*Ion.* Ha ! What mean'st thou by these words ?

*Creusa.* Who on my rocks, whence with spontaneous  
shoot  
The fragrant olive springs, my native hills,  
Fixes her seat.

*Ion.* To me thou speak'st so darkly,  
That what thou mean'st I cannot comprehend.

*Creusa.* Beneath the rock where her harmonious lays  
The nightingale attunes, I by Apollo—

*Ion.* Why dost thou name Apollo?

*Creusa.* Was embraced  
In secrecy—

*Ion.* Speak on ; for fair renown,  
And prosperous fortune, will to me accrue  
From the event which thou relat'st.

*Creusa.* To Phœbus,  
While in its orbit the tenth moon revolved,  
I bore a son, whom I concealed.

*Ion.* Most grateful  
Are these strange tidings, if thou utter truth.

*Creusa.* The fillets which I erst, while yet a maid,  
Wove with my shuttle I around you twined ;  
But you ne'er clung to this maternal breast ;  
Nor did these hands for you the laver hold,  
But in a desert cavern were you thrown  
To perish, torn by the remorseless beaks  
Of hungry vultures.

*Ion.* What a horrid deed  
Was this, in thee, O mother !

*Creusa.* By my fears  
Held fast in bondage, O my son, your life  
I would have cast away—would then, though loth,  
Have murdered you.

*Ion.* Thou too didst scarce escape  
From being slain by my unholy rage.

*Creusa.* Such were my wretched fortunes then, and such  
The apprehensions which I felt. Now here,  
Now there, we by calamity are whirled,  
Then sport anew in prosperous fortune's gales  
Which often veer ; but may they fix at last !  
May what I have endured suffice ! But now,  
My son, doth a propitious breeze succeed  
The tempest of our woes.

*Chorus.* Let no man think  
Aught wonderful that happens, when compared  
With these events.

*Ion.* O fortune, who hast wrought



A change in countless multitudes, whom first  
 Thou hast made wretched, and then blest anew ;  
 What an important crisis of my life  
 Is this which I have reached, and been exposed  
 To dangers imminent, of slaying her  
 Who bore me, and enduring such a death  
 As I deserved not ! While we view the sun  
 Perform his bright career, fresh truths like these  
 Each day lie open for the world to learn.  
 My mother (blest discovery !), thee I find,  
 Nor have I any reason to complain  
 Of being sprung from an ignoble sire.  
**But** I would tell the rest to thee alone :  
 Come hither ; let me whisper in thine ear,  
 And over these transactions cast a veil  
 Of darkness. Recollect, if at the time  
 When thou thy virgin purity didst forfeit  
 Thou wert not by some secret paramour  
 Betrayed, and afterwards induced to charge  
 The god with having ruined thee ; my scorn  
 Endeavouring to avoid, by the assertion  
 That Phœbus is my father, though by him  
 Thou wert not pregnant.

*Creusa.* No, by her who fought,  
 Borne in a car sublime, for thundering Jove  
 Against the giant's earth-born race, Minerva,  
 Victorious goddess, by no mortal sire  
 Were you, my son, begotten, but by him  
 Who nurtured you, Apollo, mighty king.

*Ion.* What motive, then, had he for yielding up  
 His offspring to another sire, pretending  
 That I am Xuthus' son ?

*Creusa.* The god asserts not  
 That Xuthus was the author of your birth,  
 But you, his offspring, doth on him bestow.  
 For to a friend a friend may give his son  
 T' inherit his possessions.

*Ion.* O my mother,  
 An anxious doubt, whether the god speak truth,  
 Or utter a fallacious oracle,  
 Is cause sufficient to disturb my soul.

*Creusa.* Hear then, my son, what thoughts to me occur :

Your benefactor Phœbus places you  
In an illustrious house ; but were you called  
The offspring of the god, you would receive  
For your inheritance nor wide domains  
Nor aught of rank paternal. For from him  
With whom my luckless union I concealed,  
And secretly attempted to have slain you,  
How could you look for aught? But he, promoting  
Your interest, to another sire consigns you.

*Ion.* I cannot rashly credit tales like these.  
But I will go into the fane, and ask  
Apollo, whether from a mortal sire  
I spring, or whether I am Phœbus' son.  
Ha ! Who is that, who on the pinnacles  
Of this high dome ascending, like the sun,  
Displays her front celestial? Let us fly,  
My mother, lest perchance we view the gods  
When we are not permitted to behold them.

MINERVA, ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

*Minerva.* O stay, for 'tis from me you fly, who bear  
To you no hate, but in th' Athenian realm  
And here am equally your friend : I, Pallas,  
From whom your native land derives its name,  
Am hither come with swift career despatched  
By Phœbus, in your presence who himself  
Deems it not meet t' appear, lest his past conduct  
In foul reproach involve him : but the god  
Sends me t' inform you that Creusa bore,  
And Phœbus was the father who begot you.  
But you, the god, as he sees fit, bestows,  
Not upon him who is your real sire,  
But hath contrived this plot that you may gain  
The heritage of an illustrious house.  
For when the holy oracle pronounced  
This riddle, fearing, by a mother's wiles,  
Lest you should bleed, or with vindictive hand  
That mother slay, he by a stratagem  
Hath extricated both. The royal seer  
Meant to have kept this secret, till at Athens  
He had proclaimed that you derive your birth  
From Phœbus and Creusa. But this matter

## Euripides

That I may finish now, and the contents  
Of those important oracles reveal,  
Which to explore ye by your harnessed steeds  
Where hither drawn, attend. Creusa, take  
Thy son, to the Cecropian land repair,  
And place him on the throne ; for, from the race  
Of great Erectheus sprung, he is entitled  
To rule my favoured realm, and shall be famed  
Through Greece : for his four sons, sprung from one  
root,  
Shall, on their country, and its tribes who dwell  
Upon my sacred rock, their name confer :  
Geleon the first ; then Hoples, Argades,  
And, from the shield I bear, a chief called Ægis  
Shall rule th' Ægichori. But their descendants,  
Born at a period by the Fates assigned,  
Amid the Cyclades shall dwell, in towns  
Encircled by the billowy deep, and havens  
Which to my realm will add new strength : the shores  
Of either continent shall they possess,  
Asia and Europe, but, from Ion, styled  
Ionians, they with glory shall be crowned.  
But from thee too and Xuthus shall descend  
A noble race ; Dorus, the mighty founder  
Of the famed Doric realm ; in the domain  
Of ancient Pelops, shall your second son,  
Achæus, be the monarch of the coast  
Bordering on Rhium's steep ascent—with pride  
That nation shall adopt their leader's name.  
In all things hath Apollo acted right ;  
First, without pain he caused thee to bring forth,  
Lest to thy friends thy shame should be revealed :  
But after thou hadst borne this son, and swathed  
Those fillets round him, he bade Hermes bring  
The infant to this fane, and nurtured him,  
Nor suffered him to die. Now, therefore, keep  
Strict silence, nor declare that he is thine,  
That Xuthus may exult in the idea  
Of being father to the youth, while thou,  
O woman, shalt enjoy the real bliss.  
Farewell, for from this pause in your afflictions  
I to you both announce a happier fate.

*Ion.* O Pallas, daughter of imperial Jove,  
Thy words I disbelieve not : for from Phœbus  
And this illustrious dame am I convinced  
That I derive my birth, which from the first  
Was not improbable.

*Creusa.* To what I speak  
Now give attention : I commend Apollo,  
Though erst I blamed him ; for he now restores  
To me the son he formerly neglected.  
Now are these portals pleasing to my sight,  
And this oracular abode of Phœbus,  
Which I so lately loathed. I now these rings  
Seize with exulting hands, and at the threshold  
Utter my grateful orisons.

*Minerva.* The praises  
Which thou bestow'st on Phœbus, I applaud,  
And this thy sudden change : for though the aid  
The gods afford be tardy, it at length  
Proves most effectual.

*Creusa.* Let us, O my son,  
Repair to our own Athens.

*Minerva.* Thither go,  
And I will follow.

*Creusa.* Deign t' accompany  
Our steps, and to our city prove a friend.

*Minerva.* Upon the throne of thy progenitors,  
There take thy seat.

*Ion.* To me will such possession  
Be honourable.

*Chorus.* O Phœbus, son of Jove  
And of Latona, hail ! Whene'er his house  
Is shaken by calamity, the man  
Who pays due reverence to the gods hath cause  
To trust in their protection : for at length  
The virtuous shall obtain their due reward,  
Nor shall the wicked prosper in the land

# THE PHŒNICIAN DAMSELS

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

JOCASTA.	CREON.
ATTENDANT.	MENÆCEUS.
ANTIGONE.	TIRESIAS.
CHORUS OF PHŒNICIAN DAMSELS.	MESSANGER.
POLYNICES.	ANOTHER MESSENGER.
ETEOCLES.	ŒDIPUS.

*Scene.*—AN OPEN COURT BEFORE THE PALACE AT THEBES.

JOCASTA.

O THOU, who through the starry heavens divid'st  
Thy path, and on a golden chariot sitt'st  
Exalted, radiant sun, beneath the hoofs  
Of whose swift steeds the fiery volumes roll,  
How inauspicious, o'er the Theban race  
Didst thou dart forth thy beams, the day when  
Cadmus

Came to this land from the Phœnician coast.  
He erst obtained Harmonia for his bride,  
Daughter of Venus ; of their loves the fruit  
Was Polydorus, and from him, as fame  
Relates, descended Labdacus, the sire  
Of Laius. From Menæceus I derive  
My birth ; my brother Creon and myself  
From the same mother spring ; but I am called  
Jocasta, 'twas the name my father gave ;  
Me royal Laius married ; but when long  
Our bed had proved unfruitful, he to search  
The oracle of Phœbus went, and sued  
To the prophetic god, that he our house  
Would cheer with an auspicious race of sons :  
The god replied, " Beware, O thou who rul'st  
The martial Thebans, strive not to obtain  
A progeny against the will of Heaven :  
If thou beget a son, that son shall slay thee,  
And all thy household shall be plunged in blood."  
He overcome by lust, and flushed with wine,  
In an unguarded moment disobeyed :  
But I no sooner had brought forth the child

Than he, grown conscious of his foul offence  
Against Apollo's mandate, to his shepherds,  
The new-born infant gave, in Juno's meads,  
And on Cithæron's hill, to be exposed,  
Maiming his feet with pointed steel, whence Greece  
Hath called him Œdipus. But they who fed  
The steeds of Polypus, soon taking up,  
Conveyed him to their home, and in the hands  
Of their kind mistress placed, she at her breast  
Nurtured my son, and artfully persuaded  
Her lord that she was mother to the boy :  
Soon as the manly beard his cheek o'erspread,  
Aware from his own knowledge, or informed  
Of the deceit, solicitous to learn  
Who were his parents, to Apollo's shrine  
He journeyed ; and at the same time was Laius,  
My husband, hastening hither, to inquire  
Whether the child he had exposed was dead.  
In Phocis, where two severed roads unite,  
They met : the charioteer of Laius cried  
In an imperious tone, " Give way to kings,  
Thou stranger " : yet the silent youth advanced,  
With inborn greatness fired, till o'er his feet  
Distained with gore the steel-hoofed coursers trod ;  
Hence (for what need have I to speak of aught  
That's foreign to my woes ?) th' unconscious son  
Slew his own father, seized the spoils, and gave  
To Polybus, who nurtured him, the car.  
But when with ruthless fangs the Sphynx laid waste  
The city, and my husband was no more,  
My brother Creon by the herald's voice  
Proclaimed that whosoever could expound  
Th' enigma by that crafty virgin forged  
Should win me for his bride : that mystic clue  
The luckless Œdipus, my son, unravelled ;  
Hence o'er this land appointed king, he gained  
For his reward a sceptre—wretched youth !—  
Unwittingly espousing me who bore him ;  
Nor yet was I his mother then aware  
That we committed incest. I produced  
To my own son four children ; two were males,  
Eteocles and Polynices, famed

For martial prowess ; daughters two, the one  
Her father called Ismene, but the first  
I named Antigone. Soon as he learned  
That I whom he had wedded was his mother,  
The miserable Œdipus, o'erwhelmed  
With woes accumulated, from their sockets  
Tore with a golden clasp his bleeding eyes.  
But since the beard o'ershaded my sons' cheeks,  
Their sire they in a dungeon have confined,  
The memory of this sad event t' efface,  
For which they needed every subtle art.  
Within these mansions he still lives, but, sick  
With evil fortunes, on his sons pours forth  
The most unholy curses, that this house  
They by the sword may portion out. Alarmed  
Lest Heaven those vows accomplish if they dwell<sup>th</sup>  
Together, they by compact have resolved  
The younger brother Polynices first  
A voluntary exile shall depart,  
And, with Eteocles remaining here  
To wield the sceptre of this realm, exchange  
His station year by year : but th' elder-born  
Since he was seated on the lofty throne  
Departs not thence, and from this land expels  
The injured Polynices, who, to Argos  
Repairing, with Adrastus hath contracted  
Most strict affinity, and hither brings  
A numerous squadron of heroic youths ;  
These bulwarks for their sevenfold gates renowned  
E'en now in arms approaching, he demands  
His father's sceptre, and an equal share  
Of the domain. But I to end their strife  
On Polynices have prevailed to come,  
Under the sanction of a warrior's faith  
And parley with his brother, ere the hosts  
In battle join : the messenger I sent  
Informs me he the summons will attend.  
O thou who dwell'st amidst Heaven's lucid folds,  
Save us, dread Jove, and reconcile my children :  
For thou, if thou art wise, wilt ne'er permit  
That one poor mortal should be always wretched.  
[Exit JOCASTA.]

## ANTIGONE, ATTENDANT.

- Attend.* O fair Antigone, illustrious blossom  
 Of your paternal house, since from your chamber  
 Your mother hath allowed you to come forth  
 At your request, and from these roofs behold  
 The Argive hosts, stay here, while I the road  
 Explore, lest in our passage, if we meet  
 Some citizen, malignant tongues should blame  
 Both me, the servant, who obey, and you  
 For giving such command. But their whole camp  
 Since I have searched, to you will I relate  
 All that these eyes have witnessed, and whate'er  
 I heard amidst the Argives, when, employed  
 By both your brothers, I 'twixt either host  
 Bore pledges of their compact. But these mansions  
 No citizen approaches: haste, ascend  
 Yon ancient stairs of cedar, and o'erlook  
 The spacious fields that skirt Ismenos' stream  
 And Dirce's fountains. What a host of foes!
- Antigone.* Thy aged arm stretch forth, and, as I climb  
 The narrow height, my tottering steps sustain.
- Attend.* Give me your hand, for at a lucky hour  
 You mount the turret: the Pelasgian host  
 Is now in motion, and the troops divide.
- Antigone.* Thou venerable daughter of Latona,  
 Thrice sacred goddess, Hecate, how gleams  
 With brazen armour the whole field around!
- Attend.* For Polynices to his native land  
 Returns not like a man of little note,  
 But comes in anger, by unnumbered steeds  
 Attended, and the loudest din of arms.
- Antigone.* Are the gates closed? What barriers guard the walls  
 Reared by Amphion's skill?
- Attend.* Be of good cheer.  
 The city is made safe within. But look  
 At him who first advances, if you wish  
 To know him.
- Antigone.* By those snowy plumes distinguished,  
 Before the ranks who marches in the van,  
 With ease sustaining on his nervous arm  
 That brazen shield?



*Attend.*

A general, royal maid.

*Antigone.* Who is he? In what country was he born,  
Old man, inform me, and what name he bears.

*Attend.* Mycene glories in the warrior's birth,  
But near the marsh of Lerna he resides;  
His name's Hippomedon, a mighty chief.

*Antigone.* Ah, with what pride, how terrible an aspect,  
How like an earthborn giant doth he move!  
His targe with stars is covered, and that air  
Resembles not the feeble race of man.

*Attend.* Behold you not the chief who Dirce's stream  
Is crossing!

*Antigone.* In what different armour clad!  
But who is he?

*Attend.* Tydeus, the noble son  
Of Æneus; in embattled fields his breast  
With true Ætolian courage is inspired.

*Antigone.* Is he, O veteran, husband to the sister  
Of Polynices' consort? How arrayed  
In party-coloured mail, a half Barbarian!

*Attend.* All the Ætolians, O my daughter, armed  
With bucklers, can expertly hurl the lance.

*Antigone.* But whence, old man, art thou assured of  
this?

*Attend.* The various figures wrought upon the shields  
I noticed at the time I from the walls  
Went to your brother with the pledge of truce:  
When these I see, their wearers well I know.

*Antigone.* But who is he who moves round Zethus tomb,  
A youth with streaming ringlets, and with eyes  
Horribly glaring?

*Attend.* He too is a chief.

*Antigone.* What multitudes in burnished armour clad \*  
Follow his steps!

*Attend.* From Atalanta sprung.  
Parthenopæus is the name he bears.

*Antigone.* May Dian, who o'er craggy mountain speeds,  
Attended by his mother, with her shafts  
Transpierce th' audacious youth who comes to sack  
My city!

*Attend.* These rash vows suppress, O daughter,  
For they with justice these domains invade,

And therefore will the gods, I fear, discern  
Their better cause.

*Antigone.* But where is he, whom Fate  
Decreed in evil hour from the same womb  
With me to spring? Say, O thou dear old man,  
Where's Polynices?

*Attend.* He beside the tomb  
Of Niobe's seven virgin daughters stands  
Close to Adrastus. See you him?

*Antigone.* I see him,  
But not distinctly; I can just discern  
A faint resemblance of that kindred form,  
The image of that bosom. Would to Heaven,  
Borne on the skirts of yonder passing cloud,  
Through the ethereal paths, I with these feet  
Could to my brother urge my swift career!  
Then would I fling my arms round the dear neck  
Of him who long hath been a wretched exile.  
How gracefully, in golden arms arrayed,  
Bright as Hyperion's radiant beams, he moves!

*Attend.* To fill your soul with joy, the chief, these doors,  
Secured by an inviolable truce,  
Anon will enter.

*Antigone.* O thou aged man;  
But who is he who on yon chariot, drawn  
By milk-white coursers, seated, guides the reins?

*Attend.* The seer Amphiaraus, O royal maid,  
He bears the victims that with crimson tides  
Must drench the ground.

*Antigone.* Encircled with a zone  
Of radiance, O thou daughter of the sun,  
Pale moon, who from his beams thy golden orb  
Illum'st, behold with what a steady thong  
And how discreetly he those coursers guides!  
But where is Capaneus, who proudly utters  
Against this city the most horrid threats?

*Attend.* To these seven turrets each approach he marks,  
The walls from their proud summit to their base  
Measuring with eager eye.

*Antigone.* Dread Nemesis,  
Ye, too, O deep-toned thunderbolts of Jove,  
And livid flames of lightning; yours, 'tis yours

To blast such arrogance. Is this the man  
 Who vowed that he the captive Theban dames,  
 In slavery plunged, would to Mycene lead,  
 To Lerna, where the god of ocean fixed  
 His trident, whence its waters bear the name  
 Of Amydone? But, O child of Jove,  
 Diana, venerable queen, who bind'st  
 Thy streaming tresses with a golden caul,  
 Never may I endure the loathsome yoke  
 Of servitude.

*Attend.* The royal mansion enter,  
 O daughter, and beneath its roof remain  
 In your apartment, since you have indulged  
 Your wish, and viewed those objects you desired.  
 A tumult in the city now prevails :  
 The women to the palace rush in crowds,  
 For the whole female sex are prone to slander,  
 And soon as they some slight occasion find,  
 On which malignant rumours they can ground,  
 Add many more : for on such baneful themes  
 To them is it delightful to converse. [*Exeunt.*]

## CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Borne from Phœnician shores I crossed the deep,  
 My tender years to Phœbus they consign  
 To sprinkle incense on his shrine,  
 And dwell beneath Parnassus' steep,  
 O'erspread with everlasting snow :  
 Our dashing oars were plied in haste  
 Through the Ionian wave, whose eddies flow  
 Round Sicily's inhospitable waste ;  
 Then vernal zephyrs breathed our sails around,  
 And Heaven's high-vaulted roof conveyed the murmur-  
 ing sound.

I. 2.

A chosen offering to the Delphic god,  
 I from my native city to this land,  
 Where aged Cadmus bore command,

Am come, obedient to the nod  
 Of those who from Agenor spring,  
 To the proud towers of Laius' race,  
 Our kindred governed by a kindred king.  
 Here stand I, like an image on its base,  
 Though destined to partake refined delights,  
 Bathe in Castalia's stream, and tend Apollo's rites.

I. 3.

O mountain, from whose cloven height  
 There darts a double stream of light,  
 Oft on thy topmost ridge the Menades are seen,  
 And thou, each day distilling generous wine,  
 O plant of Bacchus, whose ripe clusters shine,  
 Blushing through the leaf's faint green ;  
 Ye caves, in which the Python lay,  
 And hills, from whence Apollo twanged his bow,  
 Around your heights o'erspread with snow,  
 'Midst my loved virgin comrades may I stray,  
 Each anxious fear expelling from my breast,  
 In the world's centre, that auspicious fane  
 The residence of Phœbus blest,  
 And bid adieu to Dirce's plain.

II. I.

But now before these walls doth Mars advance,  
 And brandish slaughter's flaming torch around ;  
 May Thebes ne'er feel the threatened wound,  
 For to a friend his friend's mischance  
 Is grievous as his own : each ill  
 That lights upon these sevenfold towers  
 With equal woe Phœnicia's realm must fill :  
 For Thebes I mourn ; since, of one blood with ours  
 From Io's loves this nation dates its birth,  
 Those sorrows I partake which vex my kindred earth.

II. 2.

Thick as a wintry cloud that phalanx stands,  
 Whose gleaming shields portend the bloody fight,  
 The god of war with stern delight  
 Shall to the siege those hostile bands  
 Lead on, and rouse the fiends to smite  
 The race of an incestuous bed :

Much, O Pelasgian Argos, much thy might,  
 And more the vengeance of the gods I dread ;  
 For, armed with justice, on his native land  
 Rushes that banished youth, the sceptre to demand.

## POLYNICES, CHORUS.

*Polynices.* They who were stationed to observe the gates  
 Unbarred them, and with courtesy received me '  
 As I the fortress entered : hence I fear  
 Lest, now they in their wily toils have caught,  
 They should detain and slay me ; I with eyes  
 Most vigilant must therefore look around  
 To guard 'gainst treachery : but the sword which  
 arms

This hand shall give me courage. Ho ! who's there ?  
 Doth a mere sound alarm me ? All things seem,  
 E'en to the bravest, dreadful, when they march  
 O'er hostile ground. I in my mother placed  
 Firm confidence, yet hardly can I trust  
 Her who on me prevailed t' accept the pledge  
 And hither come. But I have near at hand  
 A sure asylum, for the blazing altars  
 Are not remote, nor yet is yonder house  
 Without inhabitants. Be sheathed my sword.  
 Those courteous nymphs who at the portals stand  
 I'll question. O ye foreign damsels, say,  
 What was the country whence to Greece ye came ?

*Chorus.* Phœnicia is my native land, I there  
 Was nurtured : but Agenor's martial race  
 Me, the first fruit of their victorious arms,  
 A votive offering to Apollo sent,  
 But to the venerable prophetic domes,  
 And blazing shrines of Phœbus, when the son  
 Of Œdipus prepared to have conveyed me,  
 The Argives 'gainst this city led their host.  
 Now in return inform me who thou art  
 Who com'st to Thebes, o'er whose seven gates are  
 reared

As many turrets.

*Polynices.* Œdipus, the son  
 Of Laius, was my sire : Menæceus' daughter

Jocasta brought me forth ; the name I bear  
Is Polynices.

*Chorus.* O, illustrious king,  
Thou kinsman to Agenor's race, my lords  
By whom I was sent hither, at thy feet,  
I as the usage of my country bids  
Prostrate myself. Thou to thy native land  
After a tedious absence art returned.  
But ho ! come forth, thou venerable dame,  
Open the doors ! O mother of the chief,  
Hear'st thou my voice ? Why yet dost thou delay  
To cross the lofty palace, and with speed  
In those fond arms thy dearest son enfold ?

JOCASTA, POLYNICES, CHORUS.

*Jocasta.* Within the palace, O Phœnician nymphs,  
Hearing your voice, I with a tardy step,  
Trembling through age, creep hither. O my son,  
At length I, after many days, once more  
Behold that face. Fling, fling those arms around  
The bosom of your mother ; those loved cheeks  
Let me embrace, and with your azure tresses,  
My neck o'ershadowing, mix my streaming hair.  
To these maternal arms you scarce return,  
Till hope and expectation both had failed.  
O how shall I accost you, how impart  
To my whole frame the transports of my soul,  
And all around me, wheresoe'er I turn,  
Bid pleasures past and distant years revive ?  
My son, you left this mansion of your sire  
A desert, by your haughty brother wronged  
And exiled from your country. By each friend  
How greatly hath your absence been bewailed !  
How greatly by all Thebes ! My hoary locks  
Hence did I sever from this aged head,  
Hence weeping utter many piteous notes,  
And, O my son, the tissued robes of white  
Which erst I wore, exchange for sable weeds,  
These loathed habiliments. Within the palace  
Your father,\* of his eyesight reft, bewails  
The disunited pillars of his house :  
Resolved to slay himself, he sometimes strives

To rush on the drawn sword ; then searches round  
 For the high beam to fix the gliding noose,  
 Groaning forth imprecations 'gainst his son ;  
 Thus, uttering with shrill tone his clamorous plaints,  
 He lives, encompassed by perpetual night.  
 But, ah ! my son, by wedlock's strictest bonds  
 United, I am told that you enjoy  
 A foreign consort, in a foreign realm,  
 To vex your mother's soul and the stern ghost\*  
 Of Laius ; on such ill-assorted nuptials  
 Curses attend. The Hymeneal torch  
 I kindled not to grace your spousal rites,  
 As custom hath ordained, and it behoves  
 A happy mother ; nor his cooling stream  
 To fill the laver did Ismenos yield ;  
 Nor on th' arrival of thy royal bride  
 Through Thebes were festive acclamations heard.  
 Perish the cause of this unnatural war,  
 Be it or sword, or discord, of your sire,  
 Or fate, whose horrors revel in the house  
 Of Ædipus : for these disasters sting  
 My soul with anguish.

*Chorus.* Great endearments rise  
 From pangs maternal, and all women love  
 Their progeny.

*Polynices.* Amidst my foes I come,  
 O mother, whether wisely or unwisely,  
 Great are my doubts : but all men are constrained  
 To love their country. He who argues aught  
 Against a truth so clear in empty words  
 Takes pleasure, while his heart confutes his tongue.  
 Yet with such panic terror was I seized,  
 Lest by some stratagem my brother slay me,  
 That, bearing a drawn falchion in my hand,  
 I cast my eyes around on every side  
 As I the city traversed : my sole trust  
 Is in the truce he swore to, and thy faith,  
 Which led me to this mansion of my sire :  
 Yet as I came full many a tear I shed,  
 After long absence, to behold the palace,  
 The sacred altars of the gods, that ring  
 Where wrestlers strive, scene of my youthful sports,

And Dirce's fountain. Hence unjustly driven  
 I in a foreign city dwell, and steep  
 These eyes in tears incessant. But to add  
 Grief to my griefs, thee with thy tresses shorn  
 I see, and in a sable vest arrayed.  
 Wretch that I am! How dreadful and how hard  
 To reconcile, is enmity 'twixt those  
 Of the same house, O mother! But how fares  
 My aged sire within, whose eyes are closed  
 In total darkness? how, my sisters twain?  
 Bewail they not their exiled brother's fate?

*Jocasta.* Some god hath smitten the devoted house  
 Of Œdipus. I first 'gainst Heaven's decrees  
 Brought forth a son, and in an evil hour  
 Wedded that son, to whom you owe your birth.  
 But wherefore should I dwell upon these scenes  
 Of horror? It behoves us to bear up  
 Under the woes inflicted by the gods.  
 How shall I ask the questions which I wish?—  
 Fearing to wound your soul—yet to propose them  
 Is my desire most urgent.

*Polynices.* Question me,  
 Leave nought unsaid! for, O my dearest mother,  
 Whatever is thy pleasure will to me  
 Seem grateful.

*Jocasta.* With what most I wish to know  
 Will I begin my questions. Is not exile  
 A grievous ill?

*Polynices.* Most grievous, and indeed  
 Worse than in name.

*Jocasta.* How happens this? Whence rises  
 The misery of the banished man?

*Polynices.* He's subject  
 To one severe calamity—he wants  
 Freedom of speech.

*Jocasta.* The wretch of whom you talk,  
 Who utters not his thoughts, is but a slave.

*Polynices.* The follies of their rulers they must bear.

*Jocasta.* This were a piteous doom, to be constrained  
 To imitate th' unwise.

*Polynices.* If gain ensue,  
 We must submit, though nature's voice forbid.



*Jocasta.* Hopes, it is said, the hungry exile feed.

*Polynices.* With smiles they view him, but are slow to aid.

*Jocasta.* Doth not time prove their falsehood?

*Polynices.* They possess  
An influence equal to the Queen of Love ;  
They banish every sorrow from the breast.

*Jocasta.* But whence procured you food, ere you obtained  
A sustenance by wedlock?

*Polynices.* For the day  
At times I had sufficient, but at times  
Was wholly destitute.

*Jocasta.* Your father's friends,  
And they who shared his hospitable board,  
Did they not aid you?

*Polynices.* Be thou ever blest !  
For he who is unhappy hath no friend.

*Jocasta.* But did not your illustrious birth advance you  
To some exalted station?

*Polynices.* A great curse  
Is poverty : this high descent with food  
Supplied me not.

*Jocasta.* To all mankind it seems  
Their native land's most dear.

*Polynices.* Words have not power  
T' express what love I for my country feel.

*Jocasta.* But why to Argos went you, what design  
Had you then formed?

*Polynices.* Apollo to Adrastus  
Pronounced a certain oracle.

*Jocasta.* What mean you?  
I cannot comprehend.

*Polynices.* That he in wedlock  
Should join his daughters to the boar and lion.

*Jocasta.* How did the names of these ferocious beasts  
Relate to you, my son?

*Polynices.* I cannot tell.  
To this adventure was I called by fortune.

*Jocasta.* That goddess is discreet : but by what means  
Did you obtain your consort?

*Polynices.* It was nigh  
When to Adrastus' vestibule I came.

*Jocasta.* To seek your lodging, like a banished vagrant?

*Polynices.* E'en so : and there I met another exile.

*Jocasta.* Who was he ? Him most wretched too I deem.

*Polynices.* Tydeus, the son of Ceneus, I am told.

*Jocasta.* But wherefore did Adrastus to wild beasts  
Compare you ?

*Polynices.* From our fighting for a den.

*Jocasta.* Did then the son of Talaus thus expound  
The oracles ?

*Polynices.* And on us two bestowed  
His daughters.

*Jocasta.* But have these espousals proved  
Happy, or inauspicious ?

*Polynices.* I have found  
No reason yet to curse the day I wedded.

*Jocasta.* Yet how prevailed you on a foreign host  
Hither to follow you ?

*Polynices.* Adrastus sware  
To Tydeus and myself, his sons-in-law  
(Who now by strict affinity are joined),  
That both of us he in our native realms  
Will reinstate, but Polynices first.  
Unnumbered Argives and Mycene's chiefs  
Crowd to my banners, a lamented succour,  
But such as stern necessity demands,  
Affording : for my country I invade.  
Yet witness for me, O ye righteous gods,  
'Tis with reluctance that I wield the spear  
Against my dearest parents. But to thee,  
O mother, it belongs to end this strife,  
To reconcile two brothers, and to cause  
My toils, and thine, and those of Thebes, to cease.  
Indulge me while I quote an ancient maxim :  
"Of human honours riches are the source,  
And rule with power supreme the tribes of men."  
In quest of wealth I hither come, and lead  
Unnumbered squadrons to the dubious field,  
For indigent nobility is scorned.

*Chorus.* But lo ! Eteocles himself repairs  
To th' appointed conference. In such terms  
As may restore peace 'twixt thy sons, be thine,  
*Jocasta,* the maternal task t' address them.

ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

*Eteocles.* With your request, O mother, to comply,  
Hither I come : but what must now be done ?  
Let others speak before me. For the squadrons  
I round the walls have marshalled, and restrained  
The ardour of the city, till I hear  
What terms of peace you would propose, what views  
Within these walls induced you to receive  
My brother, by the public faith secured,  
Extorting my consent.

*Jocasta.* Yet pause awhile ;  
For haste is incompatible with justice ;  
But slow deliberations oft effect  
Such schemes as wisdom dictates. Lay aside  
Those threatening looks, that vehemence of soul ;  
For thou behold'st not the terrific head  
Lopped from Medusa's shoulders, but behold'st  
Thy brother coming. Your benignant eyes,  
O Polynices, on your brother turn,  
For while you look upon that kindred face  
You will speak better, and his words receive  
With more advantage. Fain would I suggest  
One act of wholesome prudence to you both ;  
An angered friend, when with his friend he meets,  
Should at such interview attend to nought  
But those pacific schemes on which he came,  
Their ancient broils forgetting. 'Tis incumbent  
On you, O Polynices, to speak first,  
Because, complaining of great wrongs, you lead  
An Argive army hither. May some god  
Judge 'twixt my sons, and reconcile their strife !

*Polynices.* Plain are the words of truth, and justice needs  
No subtlety t' interpret, for it bears  
Enough to recommend it : but injustice,  
Devoid of all internal worth, requires  
Each specious art. My father's house, my interests,  
His also, I consulted : and the curse  
Which Œdipus had erst pronounced against us,  
Anxious to shun, from these domains retired  
A voluntary exile, and to him  
Surrendered up the sceptre for one year,

That in my turn I might be king, nor come,  
 With enmity and slaughter in my train,  
 Those mischiefs which from discord must ensue  
 To act or suffer. He, who to these terms  
 Assented, and for sanctions of his oath  
 Invoked the gods, hath not accomplished aught  
 Of his engagements, but still keeps the throne,  
 And o'er my portion of our father's realm  
 Without a colleague reigns. I, on receiving  
 My rights, e'en now am ready from this land  
 To send the troops, and in my palace rule  
 For an appointed time, then yield again  
 The empire to my brother, nor lay waste  
 My country, nor the scaling-ladder plant  
 Against yon turrets: yet will I attempt  
 To do all this, if justice be denied me.  
 I call the gods to witness these assertions:  
 That though each solemn contract on my part  
 Hath been performed, I from my native land  
 By lawless force am driven. I have collected  
 No specious words, O mother, to adorn  
 Truths which with equal force must strike the wise  
 And the illiterate, if I judge aright.

*Chorus.* To me, although I in a Grecian realm  
 Have not been nurtured, thou appear'st to speak  
 With much discretion.

*Eteocles.* If, in their ideas  
 Of excellence and wisdom, all concurred,  
 No strife had e'er perplexed the human race.  
 But now, among the tribes of men, are fit,  
 And right, and fair equality mere names,  
 In real life no longer to be found.  
 To you, O mother, I without concealment  
 Will speak my sentiments: I would ascend  
 The starry paths whence bursts the orient sun,  
 And plunge beneath the central earth, to win  
 Empire, the greatest of th' immortal powers.  
 I therefore will not yield up such a good  
 To any other, but for my own use  
 Retain it, O my mother: for of manhood  
 Devoid is he who tamely bears the loss  
 Of what he prizes most, and in its stead

Accepts some mean exchange. Yet more, it shames  
me

That he, who proudly comes with arms to lay  
Our country waste, his wishes should obtain.  
For this would be to Thebes a foul reproach,  
If, trembling at Mycene's spear, I gave  
To him my sceptre. Thus arrayed in mail  
He ought not to negotiate terms of peace.  
For all that by the sword our haughty foes  
Hope to exact might gentle words procure.  
If such his pleasure, he on other terms  
Shall be permitted in this land to dwell ;  
But never can I willingly forego  
That one great object, nor, while sovereign power  
Is yet within my reach, will I e'er stoop  
To be his vassal : rather come, ye flames,  
Ye falchions ; let the warrior steed be harnessed,  
With brazen chariots cover all the field,  
I never will surrender up my throne.  
Since, if we must o'erleap the narrow bounds  
Of justice, for an empire, to transgress  
Were glorious ; we in every point beside  
Are bound to act as virtue's rules enjoin.

*Chorus.* No ornaments of speech to evil deeds  
Are due, for justice hates such borrowed charms.

*Jocasta.* Believe me, O Eteocles my son,  
Old age is not by wretchedness alone  
Attended : more discreetly than rash youth  
Experience speaks. Why dost thou woo ambition,  
That most malignant goddess ? O forbear !  
For she's a foe to justice, and hath entered  
Full many a mansion, many a prosperous city,  
Nor left them till in ruin she involves  
All those who harbour her : yet this is she  
On whom thou doat'st. 'Twere better, O my son,  
To cultivate equality, who joins  
Friends, cities, heroes, in one steadfast league  
For by the laws of nature, through the world  
Equality was 'stablished : but the wealthy  
Finds in the poorer man a constant foe ;  
Hence bitter enmity derives its source.  
Equality, among the human race,

Measures, and weights, and numbers hath ordained :  
 Both the dark orb of night and radiant sun  
 Their annual circuits equally perform ;  
 Each, free from envy, to the other yields  
 Alternately ; thus day and night afford  
 Their services to man. Yet wilt not thou  
 Be satisfied to keep an equal portion  
 Of these domains, and to thy brother give  
 His due. Where then is justice ? Such respect  
 As sober reason disapproves, why pay'st thou  
 To empire, to oppression crowned with triumph ?  
 To be a public spectacle thou deem'st  
 Were honourable. 'Tis but empty pride.  
 When thou hast much already, why submit  
 To toils unnumbered ? What's superfluous wealth  
 But a mere name ? Sufficient to the wise  
 Is competence : for man possesses nought  
 Which he can call his own. Though for a time  
 What bounty the indulgent gods bestow  
 We manage, they resume it at their will :  
 Unstable riches vanish in a day.  
 Should I to thee th' alternative propose  
 Either to reign, or save thy native land,  
 Couldst thou reply that thou hadst rather reign ?  
 But if he conquer, and the Argive spears  
 O'erpower the squadrons who from Cadmus spring,  
 Thou wilt behold Thebes taken, wilt behold  
 Our captive virgins ravished by the foe :  
 That empire which thou seek'st will prove the  
     bane  
 Of thy loved country ; yet thou still persist'st  
 In mischievous ambition's wild career.  
 Thus far to thee. And now to you I speak,  
 O Polynices ; favours most unwise  
 Are those Adrastus hath on you bestowed,  
 And with misjudging fury are you come  
 To spread dire havoc o'er your native land.  
 If you (which may the righteous gods avert !)  
 This city take, how will you rear the trophies  
 Of such a battle ? How, when you have laid  
 Your country waste, th' initiatory rites  
 Perform, and slay the victims ? On the banks

Of Inachus displayed, with what inscription  
Adorn the spoils—"From blazing Thebes these  
shields

Hath Polynices won, and to the gods  
Devoted"? Never, O my son, through Greece  
May you obtain such glory. But if you  
Are vanquished and Eteocles prevail,  
To Argos, leaving the ensanguined field  
Strewn with unnumbered corpses of the slain,  
How can you flee for succour? 'Twill be said  
By some malignant tongue: "A curst alliance  
Is this which, O Adrastus, thou hast formed:  
We to the nuptials of one virgin owe  
Our ruin." You are hastening, O my son,  
Into a twofold mischief: losing all  
That you attempt, and causing your brave friends  
To perish. O my sons, this wild excess  
Of rage, with joint concurrence, lay aside.  
By equal folly when two chiefs inspired  
To battle rush, dire mischief must ensue.

*Chorus.* Avert these woes, and reconcile the sons  
Of Œdipus, ye gods.

*Eteocles.* No strife of words  
Is ours, O mother; we but waste the time,  
And all your care avails not. For no peace  
Can we conclude on any other terms  
Than those already named—that I, still wielding  
The sceptre, shall be monarch of this land:  
Then leave me to myself, and cease to urge  
These tedious admonitions. As for thee,  
O Polynices, from these walls depart,  
Or thou shalt die.

*Polynices.* By whom? Who can be found  
Invulnerable enough, with reeking sword  
To strike me dead, yet 'scape the self-same fate?

*Eteocles.* Beside thee, and not distant far he stands.  
Seest thou this arm?

*Polynices.* I see it: but wealth makes  
Its owners timid, and too fond of life.

*Eteocles.* Art thou come hither with a numerous host  
'Gainst him thou count'st a dastard in the field?

*Polynices.* A cautious general's better than a bold.

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*Eteocles.* Thou on that compact, which preserves thy life,  
Too haughtily presum'st.

*Polynices.* Again I claim  
The sceptre and my portion of this realm.

*Eteocles.* Ill-founded is thy claim, for I will dwell  
In my own house.

*Polynices.* Retaining to yourself  
More than your share?

*Eteocles.* The words which I pronounce  
Are these : Depart thou from the Theban land.

*Polynices.* Ye altars of my loved paternal gods—

*Eteocles.* Which thou art come to plunder—

*Polynices.* Hear my voice.

*Eteocles.* What deity will hear thee, 'gainst thy country  
While thus thou wagest war?

*Polynices.* And ye abodes  
Of these two gods on milk-white coursers borne.

*Eteocles.* Who hate thee.

*Polynices.* From the mansions of my sire  
Am I expelled.

*Eteocles.* Because thou hither cam'st  
Those mansions to destroy.

*Polynices.* Thence was I driven  
With foul injustice. O ye powers divine !

*Eteocles.* Go to Mycene ; there, and not at Thebes,  
Invoke the gods.

*Polynices.* You trample on the laws.

*Eteocles.* Yet am not I, like thee, my country's foe.

*Polynices.* Reft of my portion, while you drive me forth  
An exile.

*Eteocles.* Thee moreover will I slay.

*Polynices.* Hear'st thou what wrongs, my father, I endure?

*Eteocles.* Thy actions too have reached his ears.

*Polynices.* And you,  
My mother.

*Eteocles.* Thou thy mother canst not name  
Without a profanation.

*Polynices.* O thou city !

*Eteocles.* To Argos haste, and there invoke the pool  
Of Lerna .

*Polynices.* I depart : forbear to grieve  
For me, O mother, but accept my praise.



*Eteocles.* From these domains avaunt !

*Polynices.*

Before I go,

Permit me to behold our sire.

*Eteocles.*

Thou shalt not

Obtain this boon.

*Polynices.*

My virgin sisters then.

*Eteocles.* Them, too, thou ne'er shalt see.

*Polynices.*

Alas ! dear sisters !

*Eteocles.* Why nam'st thou those to whom thou art most hateful ?

*Polynices.* Joy to my mother !

*Jocasta.*

Have I any cause

For joy, my son ?

*Polynices.*

No longer am I yours,

*Jocasta.* Full many and most grievous are my woes.

*Polynices.* Because he wrongs me.

*Eteocles.*

Equal are the wrongs

I suffer.

*Polynices.*

Where will you your station take

Before yon turrets ?

*Eteocles.*

For what purpose ask

This question ?

*Polynices.*

I in battle am resolved

To meet and slay you.

*Eteocles.*

The same wish now fires

My inmost soul.

*Jocasta.*

Alas ! my sons, what mean ye ?

*Eteocles.* The fact itself must show.

*Jocasta.*

Will ye not shun

The curses of your sire ?

*Eteocles.*

Perdition seize

On our whole house ! Soon shall my sword, embrued

With gore, no longer in its scabbard rest.

[Exit JOCASTA.]

*Polynices.* Thou soil which nurtured me, and every god,

Bear witness, that with insults and with wrongs

O'erwhelmed I from my country, like a slave,

Not like the son of CEdipus, am driven.

Whate'er thou suffer, O thou city, blame,

Not me, but him : for I was loth t' invade

This land, and with reluctance now depart.

Thou too, O Phoebus, mighty king, who guard'st

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These streets, ye palaces, my youthful comrades,  
Farewell! and, O ye statues of the gods,  
Drenched with the blood of victims!—for I know not  
Whether I ever shall accost you more.  
But hope yet sleeps not, and in her I place  
My trust, that with Heaven's aid I shall enjoy  
The Theban realm, when I have slain this boaster.

[*Exit* POLYNICES.]

*Eteocles.* Leave these domains: a forethought by the gods  
Inspired, my father prompted, when on thee  
The name of Polynices, to denote  
Abundance of contention, he bestowed.

[*Exit* ETEOCLES.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

Erst to this land the Tyrian Cadmus came,  
When at his feet a heifer lay,  
Who in the meads unyoked was wont to stray,  
Fulfilling Heaven's response, well known to fame,  
And marked the spot where he should dwell:  
The oracle announced this fruitful ground  
For his abode, where, from her limpid well,  
Fair Dirce spreads a cooling stream around,  
And on her banks are vernal blossoms found:  
Compressed by amorous Jove  
Here Semele the ruddy Bromius bore,  
Whom ivy with luxuriant tendrils strove  
In infancy to mantle o'er  
And round his happy brows to spread.  
Hence, in bacchanalian dance,  
With light and wanton tread  
The Theban nymphs advance,  
And matrons all their cares resign,  
Gay votaries to the god of wine.

II.

Mars at the fount its ruthless guardian placed,  
On scaly folds a dragon rode,  
Wild glared his eyes, in vain the waters flowed,

Nor dared the thirsting passenger to taste :  
     Advancing with undaunted tread  
 To draw libations for the powers divine,  
 A ponderous stone full on the monster's head •  
 Cadmus discharged, then seized and pierced his  
     chine  
 With frequent wounds ; so Pallas did enjoin :  
     This done, the teeth he sowed,  
 And instantly, dire spectacle, a train,  
 All clad in mail, on earth's torn surface glowed ;  
     Soon was each hardy warrior slain,  
     And to the soil which gave him birth  
     Joined once more : a crimson flood  
     Moistened the lap of earth :  
     By parching winds their blood  
 Was visited, and still remain  
     Its marks on the discoloured plain.

## III.

To thee, O Epaphus, the child of Jove,  
     Sprung from our grandaine Io's love,  
     I cried in a barbaric strain :  
 O visit, visit this once favoured plain  
     Which thy descendants call their own.  
 Two goddesses by countless votaries known,  
 Proserpina, dread queen, who from our birth  
 Conducts us to the tomb, with Ceres the benign,  
     E'en she whose foodful shrine  
 Is thronged by every denizen of earth,  
     From earliest days this realm possessed ;  
 With lambent glories on their front displayed,  
     O send them to its aid ;  
     Nought can withstand a god's request.

## ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

*Eteocles* [*to one of his ATTENDANTS.*] Go thou, and hither  
     bring Menæceus' son,  
 Creon, the noble brother of Jocasta,  
 My mother ; tell him, on my own affairs,  
 And on the public interests of the state,  
 With him I would consult, ere host opposed  
 To host in battle meet and launch the spear.

But lo ! he is at hand to spare thy feet  
The toil of this their errand : I behold him .  
Approach the palace.

CREON, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

- Creon.* I to every gate  
And every sentinel, my royal lord,  
Have gone in quest of you.
- Eteocles.* Thee, too, I longed,  
O Creon, to behold : for I have found  
Treaties for peace all fruitless since I spoke  
With Polynices.
- Creon.* He, I hear, looks down  
With scorn on Thebes, trusting in his ally  
Adrastus, and that numerous Argive host.  
But we to the decision of the gods  
Must now refer. Most urgent are th' affairs  
Of which I come to tell.
- Eteocles.* What means my friend ?  
Thy words I comprehend not.
- Creon.* From the camp  
Of Argos a deserter came.
- Eteocles.* To bring  
Some recent tidings of what passes there ?
- Creon.* Their host, he says, arrayed in glittering mail,  
Will instantly besiege the Theban towers.
- Eteocles.* The valiant race of Cadmus from these gates  
Must sally forth, to guard their native land.
- Creon.* What mean you ? Sees not your impetuous youth  
Our strength in a false light ?
- Eteocles.* Without the trenches,  
To show that we are ready for the combat.
- Creon.* Few are the Theban squadrons, but the number  
Of theirs is great.
- Eteocles.* In words I know them brave.
- Creon.* The fame of Argos through all Greece resounds.
- Eteocles.* Be of good cheer ; I with their corpses soon  
These fields will cover.
- Creon.* With your wishes mine  
Concur : but I foresee that such emprise  
Abounds with heaviest dangers.

*Eteocles.*

Be assured

I will not coop my host within the walls.

*Creon.* On prudent counsels our success depends.*Eteocles.* Wouldst thou persuade me therefore to attempt  
Some other method?*Creon.*

Ere you risk our fate

On one decisive battle, have recourse

To all expedients.

*Eteocles.*

What if I rush forth

From ambush, and encounter them by night?

*Creon.* Could you return, if worsted, and take shelter  
Within these walls?*Eteocles.*

Night to both hosts affords

The same impediments; but they fare best

Who give th' assault.

*Creon.*

'Tis terrible to rush

On danger 'midst the thickest clouds of darkness.

*Eteocles.* Shall I then launch the javelin, while they sit  
Around the genial board?*Creon.*

This might alarm them :

Our business is to conquer.

*Eteocles.*

Dirce's channel,

Which they must cross in their retreat, is deep.

*Creon.* All schemes you can propose are less expedient  
Than if you with a prudent caution act.*Eteocles.* But what if we with cavalry attack  
The Argive camp?*Creon.*

On every side the host

With chariots is secured.

*Eteocles.*

What then remains

For me to do? Must I surrender up

This city to our foes?

*Creon.*

Not thus; exert

Your wisdom, and deliberate.

*Eteocles.*

What precaution,

Think'st thou, were most discreet?

*Creon.*

I am informed

They have seven champions.

*Eteocles.*

What's the task assigned

For them t' effect? Their strength can be but  
small.*Creon.* To head as many bands, and storm each gate.

*Eteocles.* How then shall we proceed ? For I disdain  
To sit inactive.

*Creon.* On your part select  
Seven warriors who the portals may defend.

*Eteocles.* O'er squadrons to preside, or take their stand  
As single combatants ?

*Creon.* To lead seven squadrons,  
Choosing the bravest.

*Eteocles.* Well I understand  
Thy purpose ; to prevent the foe from scaling  
The ramparts.

*Creon.* Comrades of experience add ;  
For one man sees not all.

*Eteocles.* Shall I to valour  
Or wisdom give the preference ?

*Creon.* Join them both :  
For one without the other is a thing  
Of no account.

*Eteocles.* It shall be done. I'll march  
Into the city, place at every gate  
A chief, as thou hast counselled, and the troops  
Distribute so that we on equal terms  
May with the foe engage. It would be tedious  
The name of every warrior to recount,  
Just at this moment, when beneath our walls  
The enemy is posted. But with speed  
I go, that I in action may not prove  
A loiterer. May it be my lot to meet  
My brother hand to hand, that with this spear  
I 'midst the lines of battle may transfix  
And kill that spoiler, who is come to lay  
My country waste. I to thy care entrust  
The nuptials of Antigone, my sister,  
And thy son Hæmon, if it be my fate  
To perish in the combat, and enforce  
Our former contract with my dying breath.  
Thou art Jocasta's brother : of what use  
Are many words ? My mother in such rank  
Maintain as suits thy honour and the love  
Thou bear'st me. As for my unhappy sire,  
To his own folly are his sufferings due,  
Bereft of eyesight ; him I cannot praise,

For by his curses would he slay us both.  
 One thing have we omitted—of the seer  
 Tiresias to inquire if he have aught  
 Of Heaven's obscure responses to disclose.  
 Thy son, Menæceus from his grandsire named,  
 To fetch the prophet hither will I send,  
 O Creon, for he gladly will converse  
 With thee : but I so scornfully have treated,  
 E'en in his presence, the whole soothsayer's art,  
 That he abhors me. But I, on the city  
 And thee, O Creon, this injunction lay  
 If I prove stronger, suffer not the corse  
 Of Polynices in this Theban realm  
 To be interred : let death be the reward  
 Of him who scatters dust o'er his remains,  
 Although he be the dearest of my friends.  
 Thus far to thee—but to my followers this  
 I add : bring forth my shield, my helm, my greaves,  
 And radiant mail, that by victorious justice  
 Accompanied, I instantly may rush  
 Amidst the fray which waits me. But to prudence,  
 Who best of all th' immortal powers protects  
 The interests of her votaries, let us pray  
 That she this city would from ruin save.  
[Exit ETEOCLES.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

How long, stern Mars, shall scenes of death inspire  
 Aversion to the feasts gay Bacchus holds ?  
 Why join'st thou not the beauteous virgin choir  
 Whose heaving bosoms love's first warmth unfolds,  
 Thy hair's loose ringlets waving o'er thy face,  
 Pleased on some amorous theme the lute t' employ,  
 Dear to the Graces, dear to social joy ?  
 But thou, a foe to the devoted race  
 Of Thebé, lead'st these Argives to their fields,  
 Forming dire preludes for a tragic dance ;  
 Nor with the god whose hand the thyrsus wields,  
 In dappled skins of hinds dost thou advance ;

Exulting in the thong and harnessed steeds,  
 Thou driv'st thy chariot o'er Ismenos' meads,  
 And 'gainst th' invaders, in each Theban breast  
 Infusing equal rancour, prompt'st that band,  
 Seed of the dragon's teeth, to take their stand ;  
 These rush to guard the walls, and those t' invest.  
 Inhuman goddess, Discord, to the kings  
 Of Labdacus' house a train of misery brings.

## II.

With sacred foliage ever clad, ye groves  
 Of famed Cithæron, whose steep cliffs abound  
 With sylvan game, thou mount where Dian loves  
 To urge through drifted snows the rapid hound,  
 Thou ought'st not to have nourished in thy shade  
 Jocasta's son ; then better had he died  
 When, cast forth from the palace, on thy side  
 In glittering vest the royal child was laid :  
 Nor ought the Sphynx, the curse of these domains,  
 That subtle virgin, to have winged her way  
 From thy proud heights with inauspicious strains ;  
 Armed with four talons, clenched to rend her prey,  
 These walls approaching, high into the air  
 The progeny of Cadmus did she bear,  
 By Pluto sent from hell, 'gainst Thebes she came.  
 New woes the sons of Œdipus await,  
 Again this city feels the scourge of fate,  
 For virtue springs not from the couch of shame ;  
 Fruits of th' incestuous womb, their sire's disgrace,  
 Are these devoted youths, accurst and spurious race.

## III.

Erst thy teeming soil gave birth  
 (As in barbaric accents was made known  
 To us by the loud voice of fame),  
 O Thebes, to that illustrious brood of earth,  
 Sprung from the teeth of that slain dragon sown,  
 Thy realm their prowess did adorn.  
 In honour of Harmonia's bridal morn,  
 To this favoured region came  
 All the celestial choir,  
 What time the turrets, which this grateful land



Impregnable by human force esteems,  
 Reared by the harp, and not the artist's hand.  
 Obedient to Amphion's lyre,  
 Arose amidst the fruitful meads  
 Where gentle Dirce leads  
 Her current, and Ismenos' waters yield  
 Abundant verdure to the field  
 Encompassed by their streams.  
 She, whom a heifer's hornéd front disguised,  
 Io, was mother to the Theban kings :  
 Successively, each bliss by mortals prized,  
 Hath to this city given renown,  
 And hither still fair victory brings  
 The noblest meed of war, the laurel's deathless crown.

TIRESIAS, MENÆCEUS, CREON, CHORUS.

*Tiresias* [to his daughter MANTO.] Lead on ; for thou, my daughter, to the feet

Of thy blind father, prov'st an eye as sure  
 As to the mariners the polar star.  
 Place me where I on level ground may tread,  
 And go before, lest we both fall : thy sire  
 Is feeble. In thy virgin hand preserve  
 Those oracles which I in former days  
 Received, when from the feathered race I drew  
 My auguries, and in the sacred chair  
 Of prophecy was seated. Say, thou youth  
 Menæceus, son of Creon, through the city  
 How far must I proceed before I reach  
 Thy father, for my knees can scarce support me,  
 And though full oft I raise these aching feet,  
 I seem to gain no ground.

*Creon.*

Be of good cheer,

Tiresias, for with well-directed step  
 Already have you reached your friend. My son,  
 Support him : for the chariot, and the foot  
 Of an infirm old man, is wont to need  
 The kind assistance of some guiding hand.

*Tiresias.* No matter. I am here. Why with such haste,  
 O Creon, call'st thou me ?

*Creon.*

I have not yet

Forgotten : but till your exhausted strength

Can be recovered after the fatigue  
Of your long march, take breath.

*Tiresias.*

With wearied step

I yesterday came hither from the realm  
Of Athens, for there also was a war  
Against Eumolpus, o'er whose troops I caused  
The dauntless race of Cecrops to prevail :  
Hence I possess the golden crown thou seest,  
As a first fruit selected from the spoils  
Of foes discomfited.

*Creon.*

That crown I deem

An omen of success. You know the storm  
Which threatens us from yonder Argive host  
And what a mighty conflict now impends  
O'er the inhabitants of Thebes. Our king  
Eteocles, in brazen arms arrayed,  
To face Mycene's squadrons is gone forth,  
But hath with me a strict injunction left,  
To learn of you what can with most effect  
By us be done the city to preserve.

*Tiresias.* This mouth, I on Eteocles' account

Still closing, would for ever have suppressed  
Heaven's dread response, but will to thee unfold it  
Since 'tis thy wish to hear. This land, O Creon,  
Hath been diseased since Laius 'gainst the will  
Of Heaven became a father, and begot  
The wretched Œdipus, his mother's husband,  
Whose eyes, torn out by his own hand, the gods  
Wisely ordained should to all Greece afford  
A dread example ; which, in striving long  
To cover from the knowledge of the world,  
His sons, as if they thought to have escaped  
Heaven's eye, with a presumptuous folly sinned :  
For to their father yielding no respect,  
Nor loosing him from prison, they embittered  
The anguish of a miserable man :  
At once afflicted by disease and shame.  
Those horrid execrations he poured forth  
Against them both : " What have I left undone,  
Or what unsaid, though all my zeal but served  
To make me hated by th' unnatural sons  
Of Œdipus ? " But by each other's hand,

Them soon shall death o'ertake, O Creon ; heaps  
 On heaps of carnage cover all the plain,  
 And Argive weapons mingling with the shafts  
 Of Cadmus' race, through the whole Theban land  
 Cause bitter plaints. Thou too, O wretched city,  
 Shalt be destroyed, unless my counsels meet  
 With one who will obey them. What were most  
 To be desired were this : that none who spring  
 From Œdipus should here reside, or hold  
 The sceptre of this land, for they, impelled  
 By the malignant demons, will o'erthrow  
 The city. But, since evil thus prevails  
 O'er good, one other method yet remains  
 To save us. But unsafe were it for me  
 Such truths to utter, and, on bitter terms,  
 Must they whom Fate selects their country heal.  
 I go : farewell ! I, as a private man,  
 Shall suffer, if necessity ordain,  
 With multitudes, the evils which impend :  
 For how can I escape the general doom ?

*Creon.* Here tarry, O my venerable friend.

*Tiresias.* Detain me not.

*Creon.* Stay ; wherefore would you fly ?

*Tiresias.* It is thy fortune which from thee departs,  
 And not Tiresias.

*Creon.* By what means, inform me,  
 Can Thebes with its inhabitants be saved ?

*Tiresias.* Though such thy wish at present, thou ere long  
 Wilt change thy purpose.

*Creon.* How can I be loth  
 To save my country ?

*Tiresias.* Art thou anxious then  
 To hear the truth ?

*Creon.* What ought I to pursue  
 With greater zeal ?

*Tiresias.* Thou instantly shall hear  
 The oracles Heaven sends me to unfold :  
 But first assure me where Menæceus is,  
 Who led me hither.

*Creon.* At your side he stands.

*Tiresias.* Far hence let him retire, while I disclose  
 To thee the awful mandate of the gods.

*Creon.* My son with th' utmost strictness will observe  
The silence you enjoin.

*Tiresias.* Is it thy will  
That in his presence I to thee should speak?

*Creon.* Of aught that could preserve his native land,  
He with delight would hear.

*Tiresias.* Then, to the means  
Which through my oracles are pointed out,  
Yield due attention ; for by acting thus  
Ye shall preserve this city, where the race  
Of Cadmus dwell ; thou, in thy country's cause,  
Thy son Menæceus art ordained to slay :  
Since thou on me importunately call'st  
The dread behest of fortune to unfold.

*Creon.* What say you ? How unwelcome are these words,  
O aged man !

*Tiresias.* I only speak of things  
Just as they are ; and add, thou must perform  
Th' injunction.

*Creon.* How much evil have you uttered  
In one short moment !

*Tiresias.* Though to thee unwelcome,  
Yet to thy country fame and health.

*Creon.* Your words  
I hear not, nor your purpose comprehend :  
The city I abandon to its fate.

*Tiresias.* His purpose he retracts, and is no longer  
The man he was.

*Creon.* Depart in peace ; I need not  
Your oracles.

*Tiresias.* Hath truth then lost its merit,  
Because thou art unhappy ?

*Creon.* By those knees,  
You I implore, and by those hoary locks.

*Tiresias.* Why sue to me ? The ills 'gainst which thou  
pray'st  
Are not to be avoided.

*Creon.* Peace ! Divulge not  
In Thebes these tidings.

*Tiresias.* Dost thou bid me act  
Unjustly ? Them I never will suppress.

*Creon.* What is your purpose, to destroy my son ?

*Tiresias.* Let others see to that : I only speak  
As Heaven ordains.

*Creon.* But whence was such a curse  
On me and on my progeny derived ?

*Tiresias.* Well hast thou asked this question, and a field  
For our debate laid open. In yon den,  
Where erst the guard of Dirce's fountain lay,  
That earth-born dragon, must the youth pour forth  
His blood for a libation to the ground,  
And expiate by his death the ancient hate  
To Cadmus borne by Mars, who thus avenges  
The progeny of earth, the dragon, slain :  
This done, the god of battles will become  
Your champion ; and when earth shall, in the stead  
Of her lost fruit the dragon, have received  
The fruit of that heroic race who sprung  
From its own teeth, and human blood for blood,  
Propitious shall ye find the teeming soil,  
Which erst, instead of wheat, produced a crop  
Of radiant helms. Die then some victim must  
Who from the jaws of that slain dragon sprung :  
But thou alone in Thebes remain'st who thence  
Deriv'st thy birth unmixed, both by thy sire  
And by the female line ; thence, too, descend  
Thy generous sons : but Hæmon must not bleed,  
Because he is espoused, nor in a state  
Of pure celibacy doth still remain,  
For he possesses an affianced bride,  
Although he be a stranger to her bed.  
But, for the city, if this tender youth  
Shall as a chosen victim be devoted,  
He by his death will save his native land,  
Will cause Adrastus and his Argive host  
With anguish to return, before their eyes  
Placing grim death, and add renown to Thebes.  
From these two fortunes make thy choice of one,  
Whether thy son or city thou wilt save.  
Thou hast heard all I had to say in answer  
To thy inquiries. Daughter, lead me home.  
Unwise is he who practises the art  
Of divination ; for if he announce  
Evils to come, he is abhorred by those

Who hear him ; but, through pity, if he utter  
Untruths that please, he sins against the gods.  
Phœbus alone, who cannot fear the hate  
Of man, his own responses should pronounce.

[Exit TIRESIAS.]

*Chorus.* What means this silence? Wherefore hast thou  
closed

Thy mouth, O Creon? But I too am smitten  
With equal terror.

*Creon.* How can a reply  
Be made to such proposal? What I mean  
To say is evident. To such a pitch  
Of woe may I ne'er come as to resign  
My son to bleed for Thebes! In all mankind  
The love they bear their children is as strong  
As that of life; nor is there any father  
Who for a victim will yield up his son.  
May no man praise me on such terms as slaying  
Those I begot! I stand prepared to die,  
For I am ripe in years, and would for Thebes  
Make due atonement with my streaming gore.  
But, O my son, ere the whole city know,  
Regardless of that frantic prophet's voice,  
Fly from this land, fly with your utmost speed  
He will proclaim the oracle to those  
Who wield the sceptre, or lead forth our troops  
To battle, visiting each chieftain stationed  
At the seven gates: if haply we with him  
Can be beforehand, you may yet be saved;  
But if you loiter, we are both undone.  
And you must die.

*Menæceus.* But whither, to what city,  
What hospitable stranger speed my flight?

*Creon.* As far as possible from these domains.

*Menæceus.* You ought to name a place for my retreat,  
And I must execute what you command.

*Creon.* Passing through Delphi—

*Menæceus.* Whither, O my sire  
Must I proceed?

*Creon.* To the Ætolian land,

*Menæceus.* But whither thence shall I direct my course

*Creon.* Next to Thesprotia.

*Menæceus.*

Where Dodona rears

Her hallowed grove.

*Creon.*

Full well you comprehend

My meaning.

*Menæceus.*

There what safeguard shall I find?

*Creon.* Its tutelary god your steps will guide.

*Menæceus.* But how shall I with treasures be supplied?

*Creon.* To you will I convey abundant gold.

*Menæceus.* Discreetly have you spoken, O my sire.

*Creon.* Now leave me.

*Menæceus.*

To your sister I would go—

I mean Jocasta, who first nurtured me

In infancy, when of my mother reft

An orphan I became; one fond adieu

To her I fain would bid, and of my life

Then take due care.

*Creon.*

But go, or you will frustrate

All I can do to save you.

[*Exit CREON.*]

*Menæceus.*

With what art,

O virgins, have I soothed my father's fears,

By specious words (my promise to accomplish)

Deceiving him who sends me hence, to rob

The city of those fortunes which await her,

And brand me with a coward's hateful name.

In an old man such weakness claims excuse;

But I should sin beyond all hopes of pardon

If I betrayed the land which gave me birth.

I go, to save this city; be assured,

Such are the terms on which I yield up life,

Content to perish in my country's cause.

If they whom Heaven's oracular response

Leaves at full liberty, by no decrees

Of the resistless destinies impelled,

Maintain their ground in battle, nothing loth

To bleed, the champions of their native land,

Before yon turrets, base were it in me,

If proving faithless to my sire, my brother,

And country, like a dastard, I should speed

My flight from these domains; where'er I live,

Shame would o'ertake me. From the starry pole

May Jove forefend, and Mars, in human gore

Exulting, who the sceptre of this realm  
 Erst gave to kings, earth's progeny, the seed  
 Of that slain dragon's teeth. But I will go,  
 Ascend the topmost pinnacles, and piercing  
 My breast, where they o'erhang the dragon's cave,  
 The very spot the seer described, redeem  
 My country from its foes. I have pronounced  
 Th' irrevocable word. But, by my death,  
 On Thebes no sordid present to bestow,  
 I haste, and from these mischiefs will set free  
 The groaning land. Would every man exert  
 To their full stretch his talents to promote  
 The public interest, every state, exposed  
 To fewer ills, hereafter might be blest.

[*Exit MENÆCEUS.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

O winged fiend, who from the earth  
 And an infernal viper drew'st thy birth,  
 Thou cam'st, thou cam'st, to bear away,  
 Amidst incessant groans, thy prey,  
     And harass Cadmus' race,  
 Thy frantic pinions did resound,  
 Thy fangs impressed the ghastly wound,  
 Thou ruthless monster with a virgin's face :  
 What youths from Dirce's fount were borne aloof,  
 While thou didst utter thy discordant song,  
     The furies haunted every roof,  
 And o'er these walls sat slaughter brooding long.  
 Sure from some god whose breast no mercy knew  
     Their source impure these horrors drew.  
     From house to house the cries  
     Of matrons did resound,  
 And wailing maidens rent the skies  
 With frequent shrieks loud as the thunder's burst,  
     Oft as the Sphinx accurst,  
 Some youth, whom in the Theban streets she found,  
 Bore high in air ; all gazed in wild affright,  
     Till she vanished from their sight.



## II.

At length the Pythian god's command  
 Brought Œdipus to this ill-fated land ;  
 Each heart did then with transport glow  
 Though now his name renew their woe :  
 By angry Heaven beguiled,  
 When he th' enigma had explained  
 His mother for a bride he gained ;  
 With incest hence the city was defiled.  
 Fresh murders soon his curses will inspire,  
 Urging his sons to an unnatural strife.  
 We that heroic youth admire  
 Who in his country's cause resigns his life,  
 He, though his father Creon wail his fate,  
 With triumph in the fell debate,  
 Will crown these sevenfold towers.  
 Of Heaven I ask no more  
 Than that such children may be ours :  
 Thy aid, O Pallas, in th' adventurous deed  
 Caused Cadmus to succeed,  
 And slay the dragon, whose envenomed gore  
 Was sprinkled on these rocks ; by Heaven's command  
 Hence some pest still haunts the land.

## MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Messenger.* Who at the portals of the regal dome  
 Is stationed? Open, bring Jocasta forth  
 From her apartment. Ho! advance at length,  
 And listen to my voice, illustrious wife  
 Of Œdipus. No longer grieve, nor shed  
 The piteous tear.

## JOCASTA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Jocasta.* Come you, my friend, to bring  
 Sad tidings of Eteocles the slain,  
 Beside whose shield you ever stood to guard  
 The warrior from the javelins of the foe?  
 With what important message are you charged?  
 \* Is my son dead, or lives he? Tell me all.

\* *Messenger.* He lives, that fear be banished.

*Jocasta.* Are our walls  
By their seven towers secured?

*Messenger.* They still remain  
Unshaken, and the city is not sacked.

*Jocasta.* Have they withstood the perilous assault  
From th' Argive combatants?

*Messenger.* The fate of battle  
Is just decided : the intrepid race  
Of Cadmus o'er Mycene's host prevailed.

*Jocasta.* Yet one thing more ; I by th' immortal powers  
Conjure you, tell me whether you know aught  
Of Polynices, for I wish to learn  
If he yet live.

*Messenger.* At present both thy sons  
Are living.

*Jocasta.* Bliss attend you : but inform me  
How ye the troops of Argos from the gates,  
Beleaguered in the turrets, could repel?  
That to my home with speed I may return,  
The blind and aged Œdipus to soothe  
With the glad tidings that this city's saved.

*Messenger.* Since Creon's son, who for his country died,  
Mounting the topmost pinnacles, transpierced  
His bosom with the falchion, and became  
The generous saviour of his native land  
Eteocles distributed seven cohorts  
At the seven gates, and to each band assigned  
Its leader, by their vigilance to check  
The furious onset of the Argive host :  
He stationed a reserve of horse to succour  
The horse, and infantry with bucklers armed  
Behind the infantry, that where the walls  
Were with the greatest violence assailed  
Fresh strength might be at hand. As on our turrets  
We stood exalted, and o'erlooked the plain,  
The Argive host we saw, with silver shields  
Conspicuous, from Teumessus' mount descend :  
Over their trenches in their rapid march  
Soon vaulting, to the city they drew near,  
While pæans, mingled with the trumpet's sound,  
At the same instant through their ranks were heard,  
And on the Theban walls. His squadron, first,

By their raised targets screened, which cast around  
 A horrid shade, to the Nēitian gate  
 Parthenopæus led, the daring son  
 Of Atalanta ; on his central shield,  
 His mother's trophy, the Ætolian boar,  
 Pierced by that huntress with unerring shaft,  
 The chief displayed. Amphiareus the seer  
 Marched to the gates of Prætus, on his car  
 Conveying victims : no unseemly pride  
 In his armorial bearings was expressed,  
 But on his modest buckler there appeared  
 A vacant field. At the Ogygian portals  
 The fierce Hippomedon maintained his stand.  
 By this achievement was his orbéd targe  
 Distinguished : Argus, with unnumbered eyes,  
 A part of which, awakening fresh from sleep,  
 Oped with the rising stars, meantime the rest  
 He with the setting constellations closed ;  
 As more distinctly, when the chief was slain,  
 Might be discerned. But Tydeus next his post  
 Before the Homolæan gate maintained :  
 With a huge lion's bristly hide his shield  
 Was covered, in his better hand a torch  
 He, like Prometheus of the Titans' race,  
 Brandished to fire the city. To the gate  
 From Dirce's fountain named his marshalled troops  
 Thy son the furious Polynices led ;  
 The rapid mares of Potnia (the device  
 Portrayed upon his target) seemed to leap  
 With panic terrors smitten, and, grown frantic,  
 All crowded in a circle to the rim.  
 Equal in courage to the God of War,  
 Next with his cohort to Electra's gate  
 Rushed Capaneus : the ensign wrought in steel  
 Upon his buckler was an earth-born giant,  
 Whose shoulders carried a whole city torn  
 With levers from its basis, to denote  
 The menaced fate of Thebes. Adrastus' self  
 At the seventh gate appeared ; on his left arm  
 The Hydra with a hundred snakes begirt,  
 Which filled the convex surface of his shield,  
 That badge of Argive pride, the warrior bore

From Thebes, surrounded by its lofty walls,  
 The serpents opening their voracious jaws .  
 Conveyed the sons of Cadmus. Each device  
 I could observe securely, as I passed  
 Betwixt the leaders of the adverse hosts,  
 Distinguished by the pledge of truce. At first  
 We at a distance fought with bows and shafts  
 And slings and stones ; but when our troops obtained  
 An easy conquest in this missile war,  
 Tydeus, and Polynices, thy brave son,  
 Both cried at the same instant, " O ye race  
 Of Danaus, ere our squadrons are dispersed  
 By weapons from yon lofty turrets hurled,  
 Why on the portals scruple ye to make  
 One resolute assault with all our strength,  
 The light-armed troops, our horse, and brazen cars ? "  
 Soon as they heard their leader's cheering voice,  
 None loitered, but full many a valiant Argive  
 \*Was through the brain transpierced, while from the  
     walls,  
 Like skilful divers, our expiring friends  
 Oft threw themselves ; the thirsty ground with streams  
 Of gore they drenched. Fierce Atalanta's son,  
 Not Argos, but Arcadia gave him birth,  
 Rushed like a whirlwind to the gates, and called  
 For flaming brands and axes to destroy ;  
 But Periclimenus, who from the god  
 Of ocean sprung, soon quelled his frantic rage :  
 Torn from the battlement, a stone, whose mass  
 Had filled a chariot, on his head he threw,  
 The stripling's auburn hair and crashing skull  
 It severed, and those rosy cheeks defiled  
 With gushing blood ; to the maternal arms  
 Of her who twangs the unerring bow, the nymph  
 Of Mænalon, he never shall return.  
 But when thy son Eteocles surveyed  
 Our triumphs\*at this gate, the rest with speed  
 He visited ; I followed, and beheld  
 Tydeus attended by a phalanx armed  
 With bucklers hurling their Ætolian spears  
 Into the loftiest towers, with such success  
 That they constrained our fugitives to quit

Their station on the ramparts ; but thy son  
 Rallied them like a hunter, and collected  
 Each warrior to resume his post ; their fears  
 Dispelled, we hasted to another gate.  
 But in what terms shall I describe the madness  
 Of Capaneus ? He with a ladder came,  
 And boasted that not e'en the lightning launched  
 By Jove's own hand should hinder him from scaling  
 The towers to sack the city. Thus he spoke ;  
 And 'midst a storm of stones, from step to step  
 Ascending, still sufficient shelter found  
 Beneath the huge circumference of his shield ;  
 But as he reached the summit of the wall  
 Jove smote him with a thunderbolt, earth gave  
 A sound so loud that all were seized with terror ;  
 As from a sling his scattered limbs were thrown,  
 His blasted tresses mounted to the skies,  
 On earth his blood was sprinkled, but his hands  
 And feet were, like Ixion on the wheel,  
 Whirled with incessant motion, till at length  
 Down to the ground he fell a smouldering corse.  
 Soon as Adrastus saw Jove warred against him,  
 He with his Argive host in swift retreat  
 Again the trenches crossed : but when our troops  
 Marked the auspicious sign vouchsafed by Jove,  
 They from the gates rushed forth with brazen cars,  
 With cavalry in ponderous arms arrayed,  
 And 'midst the Argive squadrons hurled their spears :  
 Each ill concurred to overwhelm the foe,  
 Death raged amongst them, from their chariots thrown  
 They perished, wheels flew off, 'gainst axle crashed  
 Axle, and corses were on corses heaped.  
 The Theban turrets we this day have saved  
 From ruin, but to the immortal powers,  
 And them alone, belongs it to decide  
 Whether auspicious fortune on this land  
 Shall smile hereafter.

*Chorus.* In th' embattled field  
 'Tis glorious to prevail : but were the gods  
 More favourably disposed, I should enjoy  
 A greater share of bliss.

*Jocasta.* The gods and fortune

Have amply done their part : for both my sons  
Are living, and the city hath escaped :  
Unhappy Crœon only seems to reap  
The bitter fruits of my accursed nuptials  
With Œdipus, for he hath lost his son,  
And such event, though fortunate for Thebes,  
To him is grievous. In your tale proceed.  
Say on ; what farther have my sons resolved ?

*Messenger.* The sequel wave ; for all with thee thus far  
Goes prosperously.

*Jocasta.* These words but serve to raise  
Suspicion : nothing must be left untold.

*Messenger.* What wouldst thou more than that thy sons are  
safe ?

*Jocasta.* But whether my good fortune will prove lasting  
I wish to know.

*Messenger.* Release me : for thy son  
Is left without his shield-bearer.

*Jocasta.* Some ill  
In mystic darkness wrapt you strive to hide.

*Messenger.* I to these welcome tidings cannot add  
Such as would make thee wretched.

*\*Jocasta.* No way left,  
Unless you through the air could wing your flight,  
Have you to 'scape me.

*Messenger.* After this glad message  
Why wilt thou not allow me to depart,  
Rather than speak of grievous ills. Thy sons  
Are both resolved on a most impious deed :  
Apart from either army to engage  
In single combat, to the Argive troops  
And the assembled citizens of Thebes  
Have they addressed such language as ne'er ought  
To reach their ears. Eteocles began :  
Above the field high on a tower he stood,  
Commanding silence first to be proclaimed  
Through all the host, and cried : " O peerless chiefs  
Of the Achaian land, who, to invade  
This city, from the realms of Danaus come,  
And ye who spring from Cadmus, in the cause  
Of Polynices barter not your lives,  
Nor yet on my behalf ; I from such dangers

To save you, with my brother will engage  
 In single combat, and if him I slay  
 Here in this palace shall I reign alone,  
 But I to him the city will yield up  
 If I am vanquished : from the bloody strife  
 Desisting, ye to Argos shall return,  
 Nor perish in a foreign land : enough  
 Of Thebans too on this ensanguined plain  
 Lie breathless corpses." With these words his speech  
 The dauntless chief concluded. From the ranks,  
 Thy offspring, Polynices, then advanced  
 And the proposal praised, while, with a shout,  
 The Argive and the Theban hosts, who deemed  
 Such combat just, their public sanction gave.  
 Then was the truce agreed on ; 'twixt both hosts  
 The generals met, and by a solemn oath  
 Engaged themselves the compact to fulfil.  
 In brazen panoply, without delay  
 The sons of aged Œdipus were clad ;  
 His friends, the noblest Theban youths, equipped  
 The ruler of this land, the Argive chiefs  
 Armed his antagonist ; both stood conspicuous  
 In glittering mail, their looks betrayed no change,  
 And at each other's breast with frantic rage  
 They longed to hurl the spear. Meantime their  
 friends  
 Passed by, and with these words their courage  
 roused :  
 "On thee, O Polynices, it depends  
 To rear an image of triumphant Jove,  
 And add fresh glories to the Argive state."  
 But to Eteocles they cried : "Thou fight'st  
 The battles of thy native land, obtain  
 A conquest and the sceptre will be thine."  
 Exhorting them to combat thus they spoke ;  
 Meanwhile the seers the fleecy victims slew,  
 Drew forth the reeking entrails, and observed  
 Whether the flames by unpropitious damps  
 Were checked, or mounted in a spiral blaze,  
 The twofold signs of victory or defeat.  
 But if thou canst do aught by sage advice  
 Or magic incantation, go, dissuade

Thy sons from this accursed strife ; the danger  
Is imminent, and horror must attend  
On such a conflict : with abundant tears  
Wilt thou bewail their fate if thou this day  
Of both thy sons are reft.

*Jocasta.* Come forth, my daughter,  
Antigone, thy fortunes now are such  
As will not suffer thee to lead the dance  
Amid thy virgin train—thou, with thy mother,  
Must hasten to prevent two valiant youths,  
Thy brothers, rushing upon instant death,  
Else will they perish by each other's hand.

ANTIGONE, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

*Antigone.* Before these gates, my mother, with what sounds  
Of recent horror com'st thou to alarm  
Thy friends.

*Jocasta.* Ere now, my daughter, both thy brothers  
Have lost their lives.

*Antigone.* What sayst thou ?

*Jocasta.* They went forth  
Resolved on single combat.

*Antigone.* Wretched me !  
What more hast thou, O mother, to relate ?

*Jocasta.* Nought that can give thee joy, but follow me.

*Antigone.* Say whither must I go, and leave behind  
My virgin comrades ?

*Jocasta.* To the host.

*Antigone.* I blush  
To mingle with the crowd.

*Jocasta.* These bashful fears  
Are such as in thy present situation  
Become thee not.

*Antigone.* How can my help avail ?

*Jocasta.* Thou haply mayst appease this impious strife  
Betwixt thy brothers.

*Antigone.* Mother, by what means ?

*Jocasta.* By falling prostrate at their knees with me.

*Antigone.* Lead on betwixt the van of either host,  
This crisis will admit of no delay.

*Jocasta.* Haste, O my daughter, haste, for if my sons  
I haply can prevent ere they begin



Th' accurst encounter, I shall yet behold  
 The blessed sun ; but if I find them slain  
 With them will I partake one common grave.  
*[Exeunt JOCASTA and ANTIGONE.]*

## CHORUS.

## ODE.

## I.

Ah, what boding horror throws  
 Chilling damps into my breast,  
 How is this whole frame opprest  
 By sympathetic pity for the woes  
 Of her who to those valiant youths gave birth :  
 But which of her loved children twain  
 His sword with kindred gore shall stain  
 (Avert it, righteous Jove, and thou, O genial earth !)  
 And in the strife a brother slay,  
 The stroke descending through his cloven shield ?  
 To whom the sad last tribute shall I pay,  
 A breathless corse stretcht weltering on the field ?

## II.

Woe to thee, thou Theban ground !  
 Those twin lions fired with rage  
 Couch their lances to engage,  
 And stand prepared to aim the deadly wound,  
 In evil hour the thought of single fight  
 Entered their souls. While many a tear  
 Shuddering with excess of fear,  
 For them I vainly shed, their dirge will I recite,  
 Though in a harsh barbaric strain ;  
 Their destined portion slaughter is at hand,  
 Ere Phœbus sinks into the western main  
 Their forfeit lives the furies shall demand,  
 But I my warbled lamentations cease,  
 For, with a brow by clouds of grief o'ercast,  
 Creon, approaching these abodes, I view.

## CREON, CHORUS.

*Creon.* Ah me ! shall I bewail my private woes  
 Or those of Thebes surrounded by such clouds

As Acheron exhales ! My valiant son  
 Died for his country, an illustrious name  
 Obtaining, but to me a source of grief.  
 That self-devoted victim's mangled corse  
 I, from yon rock, the dragon's curst abode,  
 Wretch that I am, have in these hands just borne :  
 With lamentations my whole house resounds.  
 I, a forlorn old man, my aged sister  
 Jocasta come to fetch, that she may lave  
 And on the decent bier stretch forth the corse  
 Of my departed son. For it behoves  
 The living, by bestowing on the dead  
 Funereal honours, to adore the god  
 Who rules in hell beneath.

*Chorus.* From these abodes  
 O Creon, is your sister just gone forth,  
 And on her mother's footsteps did attend  
 The nymph Antigone.

*Creon.* Inform me, whither,  
 And to what scene of recent woe ?

*Chorus.* She heard  
 Her sons by single combat were resolved  
 Their contest for this palace to decide.

*Creon.* What sayst thou ? I came hither but to grace  
 With due sepulchral rites my breathless son,  
 Nor of these fresh disasters thought to hear.

*Chorus.* 'Tis a long time, O Creon, since your sister  
 Went hence ; ere now I deem the fatal strife  
 Betwixt the sons of Œdipus is ended.

*Creon.* Ah me ! an evil omen I behold  
 In that deep gloom which overcasts the eyes  
 And visage of yon messenger ; he comes,  
 No doubt, the whole transaction to relate.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

*Messenger.* Wretch that I am ! What language can I find ?

*Creon.* We are undone ; for with a luckless prelude  
 Thy speech begins.

*Messenger.* I yet again exclaim,  
 Ah, wretched me ! Most grievous are the tidings  
 I bring.

*Creon.* Of any farther ills than those  
Which have already happened, wouldst thou speak

*Messenger.* Your sister's sons, O Creon, are no more.

*Creon.* Great are the woes, alas ! which thou relat'st,  
To me and to this city.

*Messenger.* Hast thou heard,  
O house of Ædipus, how both his sons  
Partook one common fate ?

*Chorus.* These very walls,  
Were they endued with sense, would shed a tear.

*Creon.* Oh, what a load of misery ! wretched me !

*Messenger.* Did you but know of your fresh ills—

*Creon.* Could fate  
Have any ills more grievous in reserve ?

*Messenger.* With her two sons your wretched sister's dead.

*Chorus.* In concert wake, my friends, the plaintive strain,  
And smite your heads with those uplifted hands.

*Creon.* Hapless Jocasta, what a close of life  
And wedlock, through th' enigma of the Sphinx,  
Hast thou experienced ! But how both her sons  
Were slain in that dire contest, through the curses  
Pronounced by Ædipus their injured sire,  
Inform me.

*Messenger.* How Thebes triumphed o'er th' assailants,  
And her beleaguered turrets saved, you know ;  
Nor are the walls so distant, but from thence  
Ere now those great events you must have heard.  
Soon as in brazen panoply the sons  
Of aged Ædipus were clad, they stood  
In the midway 'twixt either host, kings both,  
Of mighty hosts both chieftains, to decide  
This strife in single combat. Then his eyes  
Towards Argos turning, Polynices prayed :  
" O Juno, awful queen, for I became  
Thy votary since the daughter of Adrastus  
I wedded, and in his dominions found  
A habitation, grant that I may slay  
My brother, and with kindred gore distain  
In the dire conflict this victorious arm ;  
For an unseemly wreath, nor to be gained  
Unless I take away the life of him  
Who springs from the same parents, I to thee

My vows address." Tears burst forth, in a stream  
 Equal to the calamity they wailed,  
 From multitudes, who on each other gazed.  
 Eteocles, then turning to the fane  
 Of Pallas, goddess of the golden shield,  
 Exclaimed : " O daughter of imperial Jove,  
 Grant me with vigorous arm a conquering spear  
 To hurl against my brother's breast, and smite  
 The man who comes to lay my country waste."  
 But when Etruria's trumpet with shrill voice  
 Had, like the kindled torch, a signal given  
 The combat to begin, with dreadful rage  
 Against each other rushing, like two boars  
 Whetting their ruthless tusks, they fought till foam  
 O'erspread their cheeks ; with pointed spears they  
 made

A furious onset ; but each warrior stooped  
 Behind his brazen target, and the weapon  
 Was aimed in vain ; when'er above the rim  
 Of his huge buckler either chief beheld  
 The face of his antagonist, he strove  
 To pierce it with his spear ; but through the holes  
 Bored in the centre of their shields they both  
 With caution looked, nor could inflict a wound  
 By the protended javelin. A cold sweat,  
 Through terror for the safety of their friends,  
 From every pore of those who viewed the fight,  
 Far more than from the combatants, arose.  
 But, stumbling on a stone beneath his feet,  
 Eteocles had chanced to leave one leg  
 Unguarded by his shield ; then onward rushed  
 Fierce Polynices with his lifted spear,  
 And marking where he at the part exposed  
 Most surely might direct the stroke, his ankle  
 Pierced with an Argive weapon, while the race  
 Of Danaus gave a universal shout.  
 But in this struggle, when the chief who first  
 Was wounded saw the shoulder of his foe  
 Laid bare, he into Polynices' breast,  
 His utmost force exerting, thrust his spear.  
 Again the citizens of Thebes rejoiced ;  
 But at the point his weapon broke : disarmed

Backwards he sunk, and on one knee sustained  
 The weight of his whole body ; from the ground  
 Meantime the fragment of a massive rock  
 Uprearing, he at Polynices threw,  
 And smote his shivered javelin. Of their spears  
 Now both deprived on equal terms they fought.  
 With their drawn falchions hand to hand, the din  
 Of war resounded from their crashing shields.  
 Then haply to Eteocles occurred  
 A stratagem in Thessaly devised,  
 Which through his frequent commerce with that land  
 He had adopted ; from the stubborn fight,  
 As if disabled, seeming to retire,  
 His left leg he drew back, but with his shield  
 Guarded his flank, on his right foot sprung forward,  
 Plunged in the navel of the foe his sword,  
 And pierced the spinal joint ; his sides through pain  
 Now writhing, Polynices fell, with drops  
 Of gore the earth distaining. But his brother,  
 As if he in the combat had obtained  
 Decisive victory, casting on the ground  
 His falchion, tore the glittering spoils away,  
 Fixing his thoughts on those alone and blind  
 To his own safety ; hence was he deceived :  
 For, still with a small portion of the breath  
 Of life endued, fallen Polynices, grasping  
 His sword e'en in the agonies of death,  
 The liver of Eteocles transpierced.  
 With furious teeth they rend the crimson soil,  
 And prostrate by each other's side have left  
 The conquest dubious.

*Creon.*

Much, alas ! thy woes

Do I bewail, for by the strictest ties  
 With thee, O Œdipus, am I connected ;  
 An angry god, too plainly it appears,  
 Thy imprecations hath fulfilled.

*Messenger.*

What woes

Succeeded these, now hear. As both her sons  
 Expiring lay, with an impetuous step,  
 Attended by Antigone, rushed forth  
 The wretched mother : pierced with deadly wounds  
 Beholding them, " My children," she exclaimed,

"Too late to your assistance am I come."  
Embracing each by turns, she then bewailed  
The toil with which she at her breast in vain  
Had nurtured them. She ended with a groan,  
In which their sister joined : "O ye who cherished  
A drooping mother's age, my nuptial rites,  
Dear brothers, ere the hymeneal morn  
Have ye deserted." From his inmost breast  
Eteocles with difficulty breathed ;  
His mother's voice, however, reached his ear,  
And stretching forth his clammy hand, no words  
Had he to utter, but his swimming eyes  
Shed tears expressive of his filial love.  
But Polynices, whose lungs still performed  
Their functions, gazing on his aged mother  
And sister, cried, "O mother, we are lost ;  
I pity thee—my sister too I pity—  
And my slain brother, for although that friend  
Became a foe, this heart still holds him dear.  
But bury me, O thou who gav'st me birth,  
And my loved sister, in my native land  
Your mediation to appease the city  
Uniting, that of my paternal soil  
Enough for a poor grave I may obtain,  
Though I have lost the empire. Close these eyes  
With thy maternal hand " (her hand he placed  
Over his eyelids), "and farewell : the shades  
Of night already compass me around."  
Their miserable souls they both breathed forth  
At the same instant. When their mother saw  
This fresh calamity, no longer able  
The weight of her afflictions to sustain,  
She from the corpses of her sons snatched up  
A sword, and an atrocious deed performed ;  
For through her neck the pointed steel she drove,  
And lies in death 'twixt those she held most dear,  
E'en now embracing both. A strife of words  
Broke forth in the two armies : we maintained  
The triumph to our king belonged, but they  
To his antagonist. Amid the chiefs  
A vehement contention rose ; some urged  
That Polynices' spear first gave the wound ;

Others, that since both combatants were slain  
 The victory still was dubious. From the lines  
 Of battle now Antigone retired ;  
 They rushed to arms ; but with auspicious forethought  
 The progeny of Cadmus had not thrown  
 Their shields aside ; we in an instant made  
 A fierce assault, invading by surprise  
 The host of Argos yet unsheathed in mail ;  
 Not one withstood the shock, they o'er the field  
 In a tumultuous flight were scattered wide :  
 Gore streamed from many a corse of those who fell  
 Beneath our spears. No sooner had we gained  
 A victory in the combat, than some reared  
 The statue of imperial Jove, adorned  
 With trophies : others, stripping off the shields  
 Of the slain Argives, lodged within the walls  
 Our plunder : with Antigone, the rest  
 Bring hither the remains of the deceased,  
 That o'er them every friend may shed a tear,  
 For to the city hath this conflict proved  
 In part the most auspicious, but in part  
 The source of grievous ills.

*Chorus.*

By fame alone  
 No longer are the miseries which this house  
 Have visited made public ; at the gates  
 Are the three corses to be seen of those  
 Who, by one common death, have in the shades  
 Of everlasting night their portion found.

. ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

*Antigone.* The wavy ringlets o'er my tender cheeks  
 I cease to spread, regardless of the blush  
 Which tinges with a crimson hue the face  
 Of virgins. Onward am I borne with speed  
 Like the distracted Mænades, not busied  
 In Bacchus' rites, but Pluto's, from my hair  
 Rending the golden caul, and casting off  
 The saffron robe ; o'er the funereal pomp  
 (Ah me !) presiding. Well hast thou deserved  
 Thy name, O Polynices (wretched Thebes !),  
 For thine was not a vulgar strife, but murder  
 Retaliated by murder hath destroyed

## The Phœnician Damsels 273

The house of *Œdipus* ; the source whence streamed  
 Fraternal gore was parricide. But whom  
 Shall I invoke to lead the tuneful dirge  
 Or in what plaints, taught by the tragic Muse,  
 Solicit yonder vaulted roofs to join  
 With me in tears, while hither I conduct  
 Three kindred corpses smeared with gore, to add  
 Fresh triumphs to that fury who marked out  
 For total ruin the devoted house  
 Of thee, O *Œdipus*, whose luckless skill  
 That intricate enigma did unfold,  
 And slay the Sphinx who chanted it? My sire,  
 What Grecian, what Barbarian, or what chief  
 In ancient days illustrious, who that sprung  
 From human race, hath e'er endured such ills  
 As thou hast done, such public griefs endured?  
 Seated upon the topmost spray of oak,  
 Of branching pine, the bird, who just lost  
 Its mother, wakes a sympathetic song  
 Of plaints and anguish: thus o'er the deceased  
 Lamenting, I in solitude shall waste  
 The remnant of my life 'midst gushing tears.  
 O'er whom shall I first cast the tresses rent  
 From these disfigured brows, upon the breasts  
 Of her who with maternal love sustained  
 My childhood, or my brothers' ghastly wounds?  
 Ho! *Œdipus*, come forth from thy abode—  
 Blind as thou art, my aged sire, display  
 Thy wretchedness. O thou who, having veiled  
 With thickest darkness those extinguished eyes,  
 Beneath yon roof a tedious life prolong'st:  
 Hear'st thou my voice, O thou, who through the hall  
 Oft mov'st at random, and as oft reliev'st  
 Thy wearied feet on the unwelcome couch?

*ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.*

*Œdipus.* Why, O my daughter, hast thou called me forth,  
 A wretch, who by this faithful staff supply  
 The want of sight, to the loathed glare of day,  
 From a dark chamber, where I to my bed  
 Have been confined, through those incessant tears  
 My woes extort, grown grey before my time,



And wasted by affliction, till I seem  
As unsubstantial as the ambient air,  
A spectre rising from the realms beneath,  
Or wingéd dream?

*Antigone.* Prepare thyself to hear

The inauspicious tidings I relate :  
Thy sons, thy consort too, the faithful staff  
Of thy blind footsteps and their constant guide,  
No longer view the sun. Alas, my sire !

*Ædipus.* Ah me ! The woes I suffer call forth groans  
And shrieks abundant : but inform me how  
These three, O daughter, left the realms of light.

*Antigone.* Not to reproach thee, or insult thy woes,  
My father, but in sadness do I speak ;  
Thy evil genius, laden with the sword,  
With blazing torches and with impious war,  
Rushed on thy sons.

*Ædipus.* Ah me !

*Antigone.* Why groan'st thou thus ?

*Ædipus.* For my dear sons.

*Antigone.* 'Twould aggravate thy griefs,  
If thou with eyesight wert again endued,  
The chariot of the sun, and these remains  
Of the deceased, to view.

*Ædipus.* How both my sons  
Have lost their lives is evident : but say,  
To what my consort owes her piteous fate ?

*Antigone.* Her tears were seen by all ; her breasts she bared  
A suppliant to her sons, whom, near the gate  
Electra, in the mead she found where springs  
The lotus ; like two lions for a den  
With spears had they been fighting : from their wounds,  
Now stiff and cold, scarce oozed the clotted gore,  
Which Mars for a libation had bestowed  
On ruthless Pluto : snatching from the dead  
A brazen sword, she plunged it in her breast :  
Slain by the luckless weapon of her sons,  
Close to her sons thus fell she. On this day  
The god who wrought such horrors, O my sire,  
Hath poured forth his collected stores of wrath  
On this devoted house.

*Chorus.* This day hath proved

A source of many evils to the house  
Of Œdipus ; may more auspicious fates  
On the remainder of his life attend !

*Creon.* Your lamentations cease, for it is time  
To mention the interment of the dead.  
But to my words, O Œdipus, attend :  
Eteocles thy son hath to these hands  
Consigned the sceptre of the Theban realm,  
On Hæmon, at his nuptials with thy daughter  
Antigone, to be bestowed in dower :  
I for this cause no longer can allow thee  
Here to reside : for in the clearest terms  
Tiresias has pronounced that, while thou dwell'st  
In these domains, Thebes never can be blest.  
Therefore depart. Nor through a wanton pride,  
Nor any hate I bear thee, do I hold  
Such language, but because I justly dread  
Thy evil genius will destroy this land.

*Œdipus.* How wretched from the moment of my birth  
Me hast thou made, O fate, if ever man  
Knew misery : ere I from my mother's womb  
Was to the light brought forth, Apollo warned  
The royal Laius with prophetic voice,  
That I, his future child, who 'gainst the will  
Of Heaven had been begotten, should become  
The murderer of my father. Wretched me !  
But soon as I was born he who begot  
Sought to destroy me, for in me a foe  
He deemed would view the sun : but 'twas ordained  
That I should slay him. While I yet was loth  
To quit the breast, he sent me for a prey  
To savage beasts ; I 'scaped : but would to Heaven  
Cithæron had, for saving me, been plunged  
Into the fathomless and yawning gulf  
Of Tartarus ! Fortune gave me for a servant  
To Polybus. But having slain my sire,  
Wretch that I am, my hapless mother's bed  
Ascending, thence did I at once beget  
Both sons and brothers : them have I destroyed  
By showering down on my devoted race  
The curses I inherited from Laius.  
Yet was not I by nature made so void

Of understanding as to form a plot  
 'Gainst my own eyesight or my children's lives,  
 Unless some god had interfered. No more.  
 What shall I do? Ah me! what faithful guide  
 My feet, through blindness tottering, will attend?  
 Jocasta the deceased? While yet she lived,  
 I know she would. Or my two noble sons?  
 They are no more. Have not I youth still left  
 Sufficient to find means to gain me food?  
 But where shall I procure it? Or why thus,  
 O Creon, do you utterly destroy me?  
 For you will take away my poor remains  
 Of life, if you expel me from this land.  
 Yet will not I, by twining round your knees  
 These arms, put on the semblance of a dastard:  
 For the renown I gained in days of yore,  
 Though miserable, I never will belie.

*Creon.* Thou with a manly spirit hast refused  
 To clasp my knees; but in the Theban realm  
 No longer can I suffer thee to dwell.  
 Of the deceased, the one into the palace  
 Must be conveyed; but as for him who came  
 With foreign troops to lay his country waste,  
 The corse of Polynices, cast it forth  
 Unburied from the confines of this land.  
 This edict, by a herald, to all Thebas  
 Will I announce; whoe'er shall be detected  
 Adorning with a garland his remains,  
 Or o'er them scattering earth, shall be with death  
 Requited: for, unwept and uninterred,  
 He for a prey to vultures must be left.  
 No longer, O Antigone, lament  
 O'er these three breathless corses, but with speed  
 To your apartment go, and there remain  
 Amidst your virgin comrades till to-morrow,  
 When Hæmon's bed awaits you.

*Antigone.* O my sire,  
 Into what hopeless misery art thou plunged!  
 For thee far more than for the dead I ~~moan~~ <sup>grieve</sup>;  
 Thou hast not aught to make thy weight of woe  
 Less grievous: the afflictions thou endur'st  
 Are universal. But, O thou new king,

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Of thee I ask, why dost thou treat my father  
With scorn, why banish him from Thebes, why  
frame

Harsh laws against a wretched corse?

*Creon.* Such counsels

Were by Eteocles, not me, devised.

*Antigone.* Devoid of sense are they; thou, too, art frantic  
Who these decrees obey'st.

*Creon.* Is it not just

To execute th' injunctions we receive?

*Antigone.* No, not if they are base and ill-advised.

*Creon.* What mean you? Can it be unjust to cast  
His body to the dogs?

*Antigone.* A lawless vengeance

Is this which ye exact.

*Creon.* Because he waged

An impious war against his native city.

*Antigone.* Hath not he yielded up his life to fate?

*Creon.* He shall be punished also in the loss  
Of sepulture.

*Antigone.* Wherein, if he required

His portion of the realm, did he transgress?

*Creon.* Know then he shall remain without a grave.

*Antigone.* I will inter him, though the state forbid.

*Creon.* You shall be buried with him.

*Antigone.* For two friends

'Twere glorious in their death to be united.

*Creon.* Seize and convey her home.

*Antigone.* I will not loose

My hold, nor shall ye tear me from his body.

*Creon.* O virgin, the decrees of fate are such

As thwart your wayward views.

*Antigone.* It is decreed,

No insults shall be offered to the dead.

*Creon.* Over this corse let none presume to strew  
The moistened dust.

*Antigone.* Thee, Creon, I implore

By my loved mother, by Jocasta's shade.

*Creon.* In vain are your entreaties: such request  
I cannot graht.

*Antigone.* But suffer me to lave

The body—

*Creon.*

I this interdict must add

To those which through the city are proclaimed.

*Antigone.* And close with bandages his gaping wounds.*Creon.* To his remains no honours shall you pay.*Antigone.* Yet, O my dearest brother, on thy lips

This kiss will I imprint.

*Creon.*

Nor by these plaints

Make your espousals wretched.

*Antigone.*

Dar'st thou think

That I will ever live to wed thy son?

*Creon.* You by necessity's superior force

Will be constrained. For how can you escape

The nuptial bond?

*Antigone.*

I on that night will act

Like one of Danaus' daughters.

*Creon.*

Marked ye not

How boldly, with what arrogance she spoke?

*Antigone.* Bear witness, O my dagger, to the oath.*Creon.* Why from this wedlock wish you to be freed?*Antigone.* My miserable father in his flight

I will attend.

*Creon.*

A generous soul is yours

Abundant folly too.

*Antigone.*

I am resolved

To share his death ; of that, too, be assured.

*Creon.* Go, leave this realm ; you shall not slay my son.

[Exit CREON.]

*Œdipus.* Thee, for thy zeal, my daughter, I applaud.*Antigone.* How can I wed, while you my father roam

A solitary exile?

*Œdipus.*

To enjoy

Thy better fortunes, stay thou here : my woes

I will endure with patience.

*Antigone.*

Who, my sire,

Shall minister to you deprived of sight?

*Œdipus.* I, in whatever field the fates ordain

That I shall fall, must lie.

*Antigone.*

Where's Œdipus,

And that famed riddle?

*Œdipus.*

Lost, for ever lost :

My prosperous fortunes from one single day,

And from one day my ruin I derive.

*Antigone.* May not I also be allowed to take  
A part in your afflictions?

*Ædipus.* 'Twere unseemly  
For thee, my daughter, from this land to roam  
With thy blind father.

*Antigone.* To a virtuous maid  
Not base, my sire, but noble.

*Ædipus.* Lead me on,  
That I may touch thy mother.

*Antigone.* Here she lies :  
Clasp that dear object in your aged arms.

*Ædipus.* O mother, O my miserable wife !

*Antigone.* A piteous spectacle, o'erwhelmed at once  
By every ill.

*Ædipus.* But where's Eteocles'  
And Polynices' corse ?

*Antigone.* Stretched on the ground  
Close to each other.

*Ædipus.* A blind father's hand  
Place on the visage of each hapless youth.

*Antigone.* Lo, here they are ! Stretch forth your hand, and  
touch  
Your breathless sons.

*Ædipus.* Remains of those I loved,  
The wretched offspring of a wretched sire.

*Antigone.* Thy name, O Polynices, shall thy sister  
For ever hold most dear.

*Ædipus.* Now, O my daughter,  
The oracle of Phœbus is fulfilled.

*Antigone.* What oracle ? Speak you of any woes  
We have not yet experienced ?

*Ædipus.* That in Athens  
An exile I shall die.

*Antigone.* Where ? In the realm  
Of Attica, what turret shall receive you ?

*Ædipus.* Coloneus' fane, where Neptune's altars rise.  
But haste, and minister with duteous zeal  
To thy blind father, since to share my flight  
Was thy most earnest wish.

*Antigone.* My aged sire,  
Into a wretched banishment go forth :  
O give me that dear hand, for I will guide

Your tottering steps, as prosperous gales assist  
The voyage of the bark.

*Œdipus.* Lo, I advance :

Do thou conduct me, O my hapless daughter.

*Antigone.* I am indeed of all the Theban maids  
The most unhappy.

*Œdipus.* My decrepit feet  
Where shall I place? O daughter, with a staff  
Furnish this hand.

*Antigone.* Come hither, O my sire.  
Here rest your feet : for, like an empty dream,  
Your strength is but mere semblance.

*Œdipus.* Grievous exile.  
A weak old man, he from his native land  
Drives forth. My sufferings are, alas ! most dreadful.

*Antigone.* What is there in the sufferings you complain of  
Peculiarly distressful? Doth not justice  
Behold the sinner, and with penal strictness  
Each foolish action of mankind repay?

*Œdipus.* Still am I he whom the victorious Muse  
Exalted to the skies when I explained  
The dark enigma by that fiend proposed.

*Antigone.* Why speak of the renown which you obtained  
When you o'ercame the Sphinx? Cease to recount  
Past happiness. For, O my sire, this curse  
Awaited you, an exile from your country  
To die we know not where. My virgin comrades  
Leaving to wail my absence, I depart,  
Far from my native land ordained to roam  
Unlike a bashful maid.

*Œdipus.* How is thy soul  
With matchless generosity endued !

*Antigone.* Such conduct 'midst my father's woes shall make  
My name illustrious. Yet am I unhappy  
Through the foul scorn with which they treat my  
brother,  
Whose weltering corse without these gates is thrown  
Unburied. His remains, ill-fated youth,  
Though death should be the punishment, with  
earth

I privately will cover, O my sire:

*Œdipus.* Go join thy comrades.

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*Antigone.* With loud complaints enough

Have I assailed the ear of every friend.

*Ædipus.* But at the altars thou must offer up

Thy supplications.

*Antigone.* They with my distress

Are satiated.

*Ædipus.* To Bacchus' temple then

Repair, on that steep mountain where no step

Profane invades his orgies, chosen haunt

Of his own Mænades.

*Antigone.* Erst in the hides

Of Theban stags arrayed, I on these hills

Joined in the dance of Semele, bestowing

A homage they approved not on the gods.

*Ædipus.* Illustrious citizens of Thebes, behold

That Ædipus, who the enigma solved—

The first of men when I had singly quelled

The Sphinx's ruthless power, but now o'erwhelmed

With infamy, I from this land am driven

A miserable exile. But why groan,

Why utter fruitless complaints? For man is bound

To bear the doom which righteous Heaven awards.

*Chorus.* O venerable victory, take possession

Of my whole life, nor ever cease to twine

Around these brows thy laureate wreath divine.



# THE SUPPLIANTS

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ÆTHRA.

CHORUS OF ARGIVE MATRONS.

THESEUS.

ADRASTUS.

HERALD.

MESSENGER.

EVADNE.

IPHIS.

A BOY, *supposed to be* MELON,  
*the son of* ETEOCLUS.

MINERVA.

*Scene.*—THE TEMPLE OF CERES, AT ELEUSINE, IN THE  
ATHENIAN TERRITORY.

ÆTHRA, CHORUS, ADRASTUS.

*Æthra.* Thou guardian power of Eleusine's land,  
O Ceres, and ye venerable priests  
Of that benignant goddess, who attend  
This temple, blessings for myself I crave,  
For my son Theseus, Athens, and the realm  
Of Pitheus, who, when his paternal care  
Had reared my childhood in a wealthy house,  
Gave me to Ægeus, to Pandion's son ;  
So Phœbus' oracles decreed. These prayers  
I offered up when I yon aged matrons  
Beheld, who their abodes at Argos leave,  
And with their suppliant branches at my knees.  
Fall prostrate, having suffered dreadful woes :  
Now are they childless ; for before the gates  
Of Thebes were slain their seven illustrious sons,  
Whom erst Adrastus, King of Argos, led  
To battle, when for exiled Polynices,  
His son-in-law, he strove to gain a share  
Of Œdipus' inheritance. The corpses  
Of those who by the hostile spear were slain  
Their mothers would consign to earth ; but, spurning  
The laws which righteous Heaven ordained, the victors  
Will not allow them to remove the dead.  
But needing equally with them my succour  
Adrastus, shedding many a tear, lies stretched  
On earth, bewailing the disastrous fate  
Of those brave troops whom he to battle led.  
Oft he conjures me to implore my son,

Either by treaty, or his forceful spear,  
 Back from those hostile fields to bring the slain  
 And lodge them in a tomb : on him alone  
 And Athens he this honourable task  
 Imposes. Hither were the victims borne,  
 That we a prosperous tillage may obtain,  
 And for this cause I from my house am come  
 Into this temple, where the bearded grain  
 First rising from the fruitful soil appeared.  
 Holding loose sprays of foliage in my hand,  
 I wait before the unpolluted altars  
 Of Proserpine and Ceres ; for these mothers,  
 Grown hoar with age and of their children reft,  
 With pity moved, and to the sacred branches,  
 Yielding a due respect. I to the city  
 Have sent a herald to call Theseus hither,  
 That from the Theban land he may remove  
 The causes of their sorrow, or the gods  
 Appeasing by some pious rites, release me  
 From the constraint these suppliant dames impose.  
 In all emergencies discretion bids  
 Our feeble sex to seek man's needful aid.

*Chorus.* An aged woman prostrate at thy knees,  
 Thee I implore my children to redeem,  
 Who welter on a foreign plain, unnerved  
 By death and to the savage beasts a prey :  
 Thou seest the piteous tears which from these eyes  
 Unbidden start, and torn with desperate hands  
 My wrinkled flesh. What hope remains for me,  
 Who neither, at my home, have been allowed  
 The corpses of my children to stretch forth,  
 Nor, heaped with earth, behold their tombs arise ?  
 Thou, too, illustrious dame, hast borne a son  
 Crowning the utmost wishes of thy lord,  
 Speak, therefore, what thou think'st of our distress,  
 In language suited to the griefs I feel  
 For the deceased whom I brought forth ; persuade  
 Thy son, whose succour we implore, to march  
 Across Ismenos' channel, and consign  
 To me the bodies of the slaughtered youths,  
 That I beneath the monumental stone  
 May bury them with every sacred rite.

Though not by mere necessity constrained,  
 We at thy knees fall down and urge our suit  
 Before these altars of the gods, where smokes  
 The frequent incense : for our cause is just :  
 And through the prosperous fortunes of thy son,  
 With power sufficient to remove our woes  
 Art thou endued : but since the ills I suffer  
 Thy pity claim, a miserable suppliant,  
 I crave that to these arms thou would'st restore  
 My son, and grant me to embrace his corse.

## ODE.

## I.

*Æthra.* Here a fresh group of mourners stands,  
 'Your followers in succession wring their hands.

*Chorus.* Attune expressive notes of anguish,  
 O ye sympathetic choir,  
 And in harmonious accents languish,  
 Such as Pluto loves t' inspire.  
 Tear those cheeks of pallid hue,  
 And let gore your bosoms stain,  
 For from the living is such honour due  
 To the shades of heroes slain,  
 Whose corseS welter on th' embattled plain.

## II.

I feel a pleasing sad relief,  
 Unsated as I brood o'er scenes of grief ;  
 My lamentations, never ending,  
 Are like the moisture of the sea  
 In drops from some high rock descending,  
 Which flows to all eternity.  
 For those youths who breathe no more  
 Nature bids the mother weep,  
 And with incessant tears their loss deplore :  
 In oblivion would I steep  
 My woes, and welcome death's perpetual sleep.

THESEUS, ÆTHRA, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

*Theseus.* What plaints are these I hear? Who strike their  
 breasts  
 Attuning lamentations for the dead

In such loud notes as issue from the fane?  
 Borne hither by my fears with wingéd speed,  
 I come to see if any recent ill  
 May have befallen my mother; she from home  
 Hath long been absent. Ha! what objects new  
 And strange are these which now mine eyes behold?  
 Fresh questions hence arise: my aged mother  
 Close to the altar seated with a band  
 Of foreign matrons, who their woes express  
 In various warbled notes, and on the ground,  
 Shed from their venerable eyes a stream  
 Of tears: their heads are shorn, nor<sup>\*</sup> is their garb  
 Suited to those who tend the sacred rites?  
 What means all this? My mother, say; from you  
 I wait for information, and expect  
 Some tidings of importance.

*Æthra.* O my son,  
 These are the mothers of those seven famed chiefs  
 Who perished at the gates of Thebes: you see  
 How they with suppliant branches on all sides  
 Encompass me.

*Theseus.* But who is he who groans  
 So piteously, stretched forth before the gate?

*Æthra.* Adrastus, they inform me, king of Argos.

*Theseus.* Are they who stand around those matrons' sons?

*Æthra.* Not theirs; they are the children of the slain.

*Theseus.* Why with those suppliant tokens in their hands  
 Come they to us?

*Æthra.* I know: but it behoves  
 Them, O my son, their errand to unfold.

*Theseus.* To thee who in a fleecy cloak art wrapped,  
 My questions I address: thy head unveil,  
 Cease to lament, and speak; for while thy tongue  
 Utters no accent nought canst thou obtain.

*Adrastus.* O king of the Athenian land, renowned  
 For your victorious arms, to you, O Theseus,  
 And to your city, I a suppliant come.

*Theseus.* What's thy pursuit, and what is it thou need'st?

*Adrastus.* Know you not how ill-fated was the host  
 I led?

*Theseus.* Thou didst not pass through Greece in silence.

*Adrastus.* The noblest youths of Argos there I lost.

*Theseus.* Such dire effects from luckless war arise.

*Adrastus.* From Thebes I claimed the bodies of the slain.

*Theseus.* Didst thou rely on heralds to procure  
Leave to inter the dead?

\* *Adrastus.* But they who slew them  
Deny this favour.

*Theseus.* What can they allege  
'Gainst a request which justice must approve?

*Adrastus.* Ask not the reason: they are now elate  
With a success they know not how to bear.

*Theseus.* Art thou come hither to consult me then,  
Or on what errand?

*Adrastus.* 'Tis my wish, O Theseus,  
\* That you the sons of Argos would redeem.

*Theseus.* But where is Argos now? Were all her boasts  
Of no effect?

*Adrastus.* We by this one defeat  
Are ruined, and to you for succour come.

*Theseus.* This on thy private judgment, or the voice  
Of the whole city?

*Adrastus.* All the race of Danaus  
Implore you to inter the slain.

*Theseus.* Why led'st thou  
'Gainst Thebes seven squadrons?

*Adrastus.* To confer a favour  
On my two sons-in-law.

*Theseus.* To what brave chiefs  
Of Argos didst thou give thy daughters' hands?

*Adrastus.* My family in wedlock I with those  
Of our own nation joined not.

*Theseus.* Didst thou yield  
Those Argive damsels to some foreign bridegrooms?

*Adrastus.* To Tydeus, and to Polynices, sprung  
From Theban sires.

*Theseus.* What dotage could induce thee  
To form alliances like these?

*Adrastus.* Dark riddles  
Phœbus propounded, which my judgment swayed

*Theseus.* Such union for the virgins to prescribe,  
What said Apollo?

*Adrastus.* That I must bestow  
My daughters on the lion and the boar.

*Theseus.* But how didst thou interpret this response  
Of the prophetic god?

*Adrastus.* By night two exiles  
Came to my door.

*Theseus.* Say, who and who : thou speak'st  
Of both at once.

*Adrastus.* Together Tydeus fought  
And Polynices.

*Theseus.* Hence didst thou on them  
As on ferocious beasts bestow thy daughters?

*Adrastus.* Their combat that of savages I deemed.

*Theseus.* Why did they leave their native land? \*

*Adrastus.* Thence fled  
Tydeus polluted with his brother's gore.

*Theseus.* But why did Œdipus' son forsake  
The Theban realm?

*Adrastus.* The curses of his sire  
Thence drove him, lest his brother he should slay.

*Theseus.* A prudent cause for this spontaneous exile  
Hast thou assigned.

*Adrastus.* But they who stayed at home  
Oppressed the absent.

*Theseus.* Did his brother rob him  
Of the inheritance?

*Adrastus.* I to decide  
This contest went, and hence am I undone.

*Theseus.* Didst thou consult the seers, and from the altar  
Behold the flames of sacrifice ascend?

*Adrastus.* Alas ! you urge me on that very point  
Where most I failed.

*Theseus.* Thou led'st thy troops, it seems,  
Although the gods approved not, to the field.

*Adrastus.* Yet more, Amphiareus opposed our march.

*Theseus.* Didst thou thus lightly thwart the will of Heaven?

*Adrastus.* I by the clamorous zeal of younger men  
Was hurried on.

*Theseus.* Regardless of discretion,  
Thy courage thou didst follow.

*Adrastus.* Many a chief  
Hath such misconduct utterly destroyed.  
But O most dauntless of the Grecian race,  
Monarch of the Athenian realm ; I blush

Thus prostrate on the ground, to clasp your knees,  
 Grown grey with age, and once a happy king !  
 But I to my calamities must yield.  
 Redeem the dead, in pity to my woes,  
 And to these mothers of their sons bereft,  
 To whom the burdens which on hoary age  
 Attend are added to their childless state.  
 Yet hither they endured to come, and tread  
 A foreign soil, though their decrepit feet  
 Could hardly move : the embassy they bring  
 Hath no connection with the mystic rites  
 Of Ceres ; all they crave is to inter  
 The slain, as they at their mature decease  
 Would from their sons such honours have obtained.  
 'Tis wisdom in the opulent to look  
 With pity on the sorrows of the poor,  
 And in the poor man to look up to those  
 Who have abundant riches, as examples  
 For him to imitate, and thence acquire  
 A wish his own possessions to improve.  
 They too who are with prosperous fortunes blest  
 Should feel a prudent dread of future woes ;  
 And let the bard who frames the harmonious strain  
 Exert his genius in a cheerful hour,  
 For if his own sensations are unlike  
 Those which he speaks of, never can the wretch  
 Who by affliction is at home oppress  
 Give joy to others : there's no ground for this.  
 But you perhaps will ask me : " Passing o'er  
 The land of Pelops, why would you impose  
 Such toil on the Athenians ? " This reply  
 Have I a right to make : " The Spartan realm  
 Is prone to cruelty, and in its manners  
 Too variable ; its other states are small  
 And destitute of strength ; your city only  
 To this emprise is equal, for 'tis wont  
 To pity the distressed, and hath in you  
 A valiant king ; for want of such a chief  
 Have many cities perished."

*Chorus.*

I address thee

In the same language ; to our woes, O Theseus,  
 Extend thy pity.

*Theseus.*

I with others erst

Have on this subject held a strong dispute ;  
 For some there are who say the ills which wait  
 On man exceed his joys ; but I maintain  
 The contrary opinion, that our lives  
 More bliss than woe experience. For if this  
 Were not the fact, we could not still continue  
 To view the sun. That god, who'er he was,  
 I praise, who severed mortals from a life  
 Of wild confusion and of brutal force,  
 Implanting reason first, and then a tongue  
 That might by sounds articulate proclaim  
 Our thoughts, bestowing fruit for food, and drops  
 Of rain descending from the skies, to nourish  
 Earth's products and refresh the thirst of man,  
 Yet more, fit coverings, from the wintry cold  
 To guard us, and Hyperion's scorching rays ;  
 The art of sailing o'er the briny deep,  
 That we by commerce may supply the wants  
 Of distant regions, to these gifts by Heaven  
 Is added ; things the most obscure, and placed  
 Beyond our knowledge, can the seer foretell,  
 By gazing on the flames which from the altar  
 Ascend the skies, the entrails of the victims,  
 And flight of birds. Are we not then puffed up  
 With vanity, if, when the gods bestow  
 Conveniences like these on life, we deem  
 Their bounty insufficient ? Our conceit  
 Is such, we aim to be more strong than Jove :  
 Though pride of soul be all that we possess,  
 We in our own opinion are more wise  
 Than th' immortal powers. To me thou seem'st  
 One of this number, O thou wretch devoid  
 Of reason, to Apollo's mystic voice  
 Yielding blind deference, who thy daughters gav'st  
 To foreign lords, as if the gods were swayed  
 By human passions. Thy illustrious blood  
 With foul pollution mingling, thine own house  
 Thus hast thou wounded. Never should the wise  
 In leagues of inauspicious wedlock yoke  
 Just and unjust : but prosperous friends obtain  
 Against the hour of danger. Jove, to all



One common fate dispensing, oft involves  
 In the calamities which guilt draws down  
 Upon the sinner him who ne'er transgressed.  
 But thou, by leading forth that Argive host  
 To battle, though the seers in vain forbad,  
 Despising each oracular response,  
 And wilfully regardless of the gods,  
 Hast caused thy country's ruin, overruled  
 By those young men who place their sole delight  
 In glory, and promote unrighteous wars,  
 Corrupting a whole city; this aspires  
 To the command of armies, by the pomp  
 Attending those who hold the reins of power  
 A second is corrupted; some there are  
 Studious of filthy lucre, who regard not  
 What mischief to the public may ensue.  
 Three ranks there are of citizens: the rich,  
 Useless, and ever grasping after more;  
 While they, who have no property, and lack  
 E'en necessary food, by fierce despair  
 And envy actuated, send forth their stings,  
 Against the wealthy, by th' insidious tongue  
 Of some malignant demagogue beguiled;  
 But of these three the middle rank consists  
 Of those who save their country, and enforce  
 Each wholesome usage which the state ordains.  
 Shall I then be thy champion? What pretence  
 That would sound honourably can I allege  
 To gain my countrymen? Depart in peace!  
 For baleful are the counsels thou hast given  
 That we should urge prosperity too far.

*Chorus.* He did amiss: but the great error rests  
 On those young men, and he deserves thy pardon.

*Adrastus.* I have not chosen you to be the judge  
 Of my afflictions, but to you, O king,  
 As a physician come: nor, if convicted  
 Of having done amiss, to an avenger  
 Or an opprobrious censor, but a friend  
 Who will afford his help: if you refuse  
 To act this generous part, to your decision  
 I must submit: for what resource have I?  
 But, O ye venerable dames, retire,

Leaving those verdant branches here behind,  
 And call to witness the celestial powers,  
 The fruitful earth with Ceres lifting high  
 Her torch, and that exhaustless source of light,  
 The sun, that we by all the gods in vain  
 Conjured you. (It is pious to relieve  
 Those who unjustly suffer, and the tears  
 Of these your hapless kindred are you bound  
 To reverence, for your mother was the daughter  
 Of Pitheus.) Pelops' son, born in that land  
 Which bears the name of Pelops, we partake  
 One origin with you : will you betray  
 These sacred ties, and from your realm cast forth  
 Yon hoary suppliants, nor allow the boon  
 Which at your hands they merit? Act not thus ;  
 For in the rocks hath the wild beast a place  
 Of refuge, in the altars of the gods  
 The slave : a city harassed by the storm  
 Flies to some neighbouring city : for there's nought  
 On earth that meets with everlasting bliss.

*Chorus.* Rise, hapless woman, from this hallowed fane  
 Of Proserpine, to meet him ; clasp his knees,  
 Entreat him to bestow funereal rites  
 On our slain sons, whom in the bloom of youth  
 Beneath the walls of Thebes I lost : my friends  
 Lift from the ground, support me, bear along,  
 Stretch forth these miserable, these aged hands.  
 Thee, O thou most beloved and most renowned  
 Of Grecian chiefs, I by that beard conjure.  
 While at thy knees, thus prostrate on the ground,  
 I for my sons, a wretched suppliant sue,  
 Or, like some helpless vagabond, pour forth  
 The warbled lamentation. Generous youth,  
 Thee I entreat ; let not my sons, whose age  
 Was but the same as thine, in Thebes remain  
 Unburied, for the sport of savage beasts !  
 Behold what tears stream from these swimming eyes,  
 As thus I kneel before thee, to procure  
 For my slain sons an honourable grave.

*Theseus.* Why, O my mother, do you shed the tear,  
 Covering your eyes with that transparent veil?  
 Is it because you heard their plaints? I too

Am much affected. Raise your hoary head,  
Nor weep while seated at the holy altar  
Of Ceres.

*Æthra.* Ah!

*Theseus.* You ought not thus to groan  
For their afflictions.

*Æthra.* O ye wretched dames!

*Theseus.* You are not one of them.

*Æthra.* Shall I propose  
A scheme, my son, your glory to increase,  
And that of Athens?

*Theseus.* Wisdom oft hath flowed  
From female lips.

*Æthra.* I meditated words  
Of such importance, that they make me pause.

*Theseus.* You speak amiss, we from our friends should hide  
Nought that is useful.

*Æthra.* If I now were mute  
Myself hereafter might I justly blame  
For keeping a dishonourable silence,  
Nor through the fear lest eloquence should prove  
Of no effect, when issuing from the mouth  
Of a weak woman, will I thus forego  
An honourable task. My son, I first  
Exhort you to regard the will of Heaven,  
Lest through neglect you err, else will you fail  
In this one point, though you in all beside  
Think rightly. I moreover still had kept  
My temper calm, if to redress the wrongs  
Which they endure an enterprising soul  
Had not been requisite. But now, my son,  
A field of glory opens to your view,  
Nor these bold counsels scruple I to urge  
That by your conquering arm you would compel  
Those men of violence, who from the slain  
Withhold their just inheritance a tomb,  
Such necessary duty to perform,  
And quell those impious miscreants who confound  
The usages established through all Greece:  
For the firm bond which peopled cities holds  
In union is th' observance of the laws.  
But some there are who will assert "that fear

*Chorus.* Dearest Æthra,  
Well didst thou plead Adrastus' cause and mine :  
Hence twofold joy I feel.

*Theseus.* He hath deserved,  
O mother, the severe reproofs which flowed  
From my indignant tongue, and I my thoughts  
Of those pernicious counsels whence arose  
His ruin have expressed. Yet I perceive  
What you suggest, that ill would it become  
The character I have maintained to fly  
From danger. After many glorious deeds  
Achieved among the Greeks, I chose this office,  
An exemplary punishment t' inflict  
On all the wicked. Therefore from no toils  
Can I shrink back, for what would those who hate me  
Have to allege, when you who gave me birth,  
And tremble for my safety, are the first  
Who bid me enter on the bold emprise?  
I on this errand go, and will redeem  
The dead by words persuasive, or, if words  
Are ineffectual, with protended spear,

And in an instant, if the envious gods  
 Refuse not their assistance. But I wish  
 That the whole city may a sanction give :  
 They to my pleasure their assent would yield ;  
 But to the scheme, if I propose it first  
 To be debated, I shall find the people  
 More favourable : for them I made supreme,  
 And on this city, with an equal right  
 For all to vote, its freedom have bestowed.  
 Taking Adrastus with me for a proof  
 Of my assertions, 'midst the crowd I'll go,  
 And when I have persuaded them, collecting  
 A chosen squadron of Athenian youths,  
 Hither return, and, halting under arms,  
 To Creon send a message to request  
 The bodies of the slain. But from my mother,  
 Ye aged dames, those holy boughs remove,  
 That I may take her by that much-loved hand,  
 And to the royal dome of Ægeus lead.  
 Vile is that son who to his parents yields  
 No grateful services, for from his children  
 He who such glorious tribute pays receives  
 Whate'er through filial duty he bestowed.

## CHORUS.

## ODE.

## I. 1.

O Argos, famed for steeds, my native plain,  
 Sure thou, with all Pelasgia's wide domain,  
 Hast heard the king's benevolent design,  
 And wilt in grateful strains revere the powers divine.

## I. 2.

May Theseus put an end to all my woes,  
 Rescuing those bloody corpses from our foes  
 Still objects of maternal love ; his aid  
 Shall by th' Inachian realm's attachment be repaid.

## II. I.

To pious deeds belongs a mighty name,  
 And cities saved procure eternal fame.

Will he do this—with us in friendship join,  
And to the peaceful tomb our slaughtered sons  
consign!

## II. 2.

Minerva's town, support a mother's cause,  
Thou from pollution canst preserve the laws  
Which man holds sacred, thou rever'st the right,  
Sett'st the afflicted free, and quell'st outrageous might.

THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

*Theseus.* [to a Herald.] Thou, always practising this art,  
has served  
Thy city, and to various regions borne  
My embassies : when, therefore, thou hast crossed  
Asopus, and Ismenos' stream, address  
The Theban monarch in these courteous words :  
"Theseus, who dwells in an adjacent realm,  
And hath a right such favour to receive,  
Requests you as a friend t' inter the dead,  
And gain the love of all Erectheus' race."  
To this petition if they yield assent,  
Come back again in peace : if they refuse,  
Thy second message shall be this : " My band  
Of chosen youths in glittering mail arrayed  
They must expect : for at the sacred fount  
Callichore e'en now the assembled host  
Halts under arms, prepared for instant fight."  
For in this arduous enterprise, with zeal  
The city of its own accord engaged,  
When they perceived my wish. But who intrudes  
E'en while I am yet speaking ? He appears  
To be a Theban herald, though I doubt it.  
Stay ; for thy errand he may supersede,  
And by his coming obviate my designs.

THEBAN HERALD, THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

*Theban Herald.* Who is the sovereign ruler of this land ?  
To whom must I unfold the message sent  
By Creon, who presides o'er the domains  
Of Cadmus, since before Thebes' sevenfold gates,

Slain by his brother Polynices' hand,  
Eteocles expired ?

*Theseus.*

With an untruth

Thy speech, O stranger, hast thou oped by asking  
For a king here : for Athens, this free city,  
By no one man is governed, but the people  
Rule in succession year by year ; to wealth  
No preference is allowed, but the poor man  
An equal share of empire doth possess.

*Theban Herald.* By yielding up this point, to me you grant

Advantage such as equals the first throw  
At dice : the city whence I came is ruled  
By one man only, not by multitudes ;  
No crafty orator with specious words  
For his own interest turns the wavering minds  
Of its inhabitants, this moment dear  
To all around and lavish of his favours,  
The next a public bane, yet he conceals  
By some fresh calumny his errors past,  
And 'scapes the stroke of justice. How can they  
Who no sound judgments form, the people, guide  
A city well ? For time instead of haste  
Affords the best instructions. But the man  
Who tills the ground, by poverty deprest,  
If to that poverty he add the want  
Of due experience, through the manual toils  
He is engaged in, to the public good  
Can ne'er look up. Those too of noble birth  
Are much disgusted when the worthless hold  
Posts of the highest rank, and he who erst  
Was nothing with his tongue beguiles the crowd.

*Theseus.* This witty herald to his message adds

The flowers of eloquence. But on this strife  
Since thou hast entered, hear me ; for 'tis thou  
That gav'st the challenge to debate. No curse  
Is greater to a city than a king.  
For first, where'er no laws exist which bind  
The whole community, and one man rules,  
Upon his arbitrary will alone  
Depend the laws, and all thy rights are lost.  
But under written laws the poor and rich  
An equal justice find ; and if reproached,

## The Suppliants

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They of low station may with equal scorn  
Answer the taunting arrogance of wealth ;  
And an inferior, if his cause be just,  
Conquers the powerful. This too is a mark  
Of freedom, where the man who can propose  
Some wholesome counsel for the public weal  
Is by the herald called upon to speak :  
Then he who with a general zeal accepts  
Such offer gains renown, but he who likes not  
His thoughts to utter still continues mute.  
How can a city be administered  
With more equality ? Where'er the people  
Are sovereigns of the land, a rising race  
Of heroes gives them joy ; but these a king  
Esteems his foes ; the brave, with those who bear  
The character of wise, he slays, still trembling  
For his ill-gotten power. How can that city  
On a firm basis stand where valiant youths,  
Like the green sheaf cut from the vernal mead,  
Are in their bloom mown down ? Why then acquire  
Large fortunes for our children, to augment  
The treasures of a king ? Or why train up  
Our virgin daughters with an anxious care,  
Merely to gratify the loose desires  
Of an imperious monarch, and cause tears  
To stream from their fond parents ? May I end  
My life ere these indignant eyes behold  
The violation of my daughter's honour !  
Thus far in answer to thy speech. Now say,  
What claims hast thou to make on this domain ?  
Wert thou not hither by thy city sent,  
Thou the impertinent harangues thou cam'st  
To utter shouldst bewail. A messenger  
When he hath spoken what his lords enjoin  
Ought to depart with speed. Next time let Creon  
A less loquacious messenger despatch  
To the Athenian land.

*Chorus.* Alas! when fortune  
Profusely showers her gifts upon the wicked,  
How insolent they are, as if they deemed  
They should for ever prosper!

*Theban Herald.*

I will now



Speak what I have in charge ; your thoughts indeed  
Differ from mine on these contested points,  
But I and all the Theban race pronounce  
This interdict : let not Adrastus enter  
The land, or if he be already here,  
Ere yon bright chariot of the sun descends,  
Regardless of these mystic branches borne  
By suppliant matrons, drive him from the realm,  
Nor furiously attempt to take away  
The slain by force, for in the Argive state  
You have no interest. If to my advice  
You yield due credence, by no boisterous waves  
O'ertaken in your course, you cross the deep  
Shall sail your nation's pilot, else the storm  
Of direful war shall burst on us and you,  
And your allies. Deliberate well, nor give  
A haughty answer, by my words provoked,  
And of the freedom of your city vain :  
For a reliance on superior might  
Is most pernicious, oft hath it embroiled  
Contending states, and roused immoderate ire.  
For when whole cities by their votes decide  
In favour of a war, there's not a man  
Expects to perish ; all avert the doom  
Which threatens their own, upon another's head.  
But while they give their suffrages, if death  
Were present to their eyes, Greece ne'er had owed  
Its ruin to a frantic lust for war.  
We all know how to choose the better part,  
Distinguish good from ill, and are aware  
That peace, the benefactress of mankind,  
Is preferable to war ; by every Muse  
Held justly dear, and to the fiends of hell  
A foe, in population she delights,  
And wealth abundant. But, these blessings slighting,  
We wickedly embark in needless wars ;  
A man to servitude consigns the man  
His arms subdued, on city the same doom  
City imposes. But you aid our foes  
E'en after they are dead, and would inter  
With pomp funereal those who owe their fate  
To their own arrogance. Forsooth, you deem

That justice was infringed, when smoked the body  
 Of frantic Capaneus, by thunder smitten,  
 Upon that ladder, which he at the gates  
 Erecting, swore he would lay waste our city,  
 Or with dread Jove's consent or in despite  
 Of the vindictive god : nor should th' abyss  
 Have snatched away that Augur, swallowing up  
 His chariot in the caverns of the earth :  
 Nor was it fitting that those other chiefs  
 Should at the gates lie breathless, with their limbs  
 Disjointed by huge stones ; boast that your wisdom  
 Transcends e'en that of Jove himself, or own  
 The gods may punish sinners. It behoves  
 Those who are wise to love their children first,  
 Their aged parents next, and native land,  
 Whose growing fortunes they are bound t' improve,  
 And not dismember it. In him who leads  
 A host, or pilot stationed at the helm,  
 Rashness is dangerous : he who by discretion  
 His conduct regulates desists in time,  
 And caution I esteem the truest valour.

*Adrastus.* The vengeance Jove inflicted on our crimes  
 Should have sufficed : but it behoves not thee,  
 Thou most abandoned miscreant, to insult us  
 With contumelious words.

*Theseus.* Adrastus, peace !  
 Restrain thy tongue, and in my speech forbear  
 To interrupt me : for this herald brings  
 For thee no embassy, but comes to me,  
 And I must answer. First will I confute  
 The bold assertion which thou first didst make.  
 I own not the authority of Creon.  
 Nor can he by superior might enforce  
 From Athens these submissions : to its source  
 The river shall flow upward ere we yield  
 To base compulsion. I am not the cause  
 Of this destructive war : nor did I enter  
 The realms of Cadmus with those armed bands,  
 But to inter the bodies of the slain  
 (No violence to Thebes, no bloody strife  
 Commencing) is, I deem, an act of justice,  
 And authorized by the established laws

Of every Grecian state. In what respect  
Have I transgressed? If from those Argive chiefs  
Ye suffered aught, they perished : on your foes  
With glory ye avenged yourselves, and shame  
To them ensued. No longer any right  
Have ye to punish. O'er the dead let dust  
Be strewn, and every particle revert  
Back to its ancient seat whence into life  
It migrated, the soul ascend to Heaven,  
The body mix with earth : for we possess  
By no sure tenure this decaying frame,  
But for a dwelling merely, through the space  
Of life's short day, to us doth it belong,  
And after our decease the foodful ground  
Which nourished should receive it back again.  
Think'st thou the wrong thou dost, when thou deniest  
Interment to the dead, confined to Argos?  
No ; 'tis a common insult to all Greece,  
When of due obsequies bereft the slain  
Are left without a tomb : the brave would lose  
Their courage should such usages prevail.  
Com'st thou to threaten me in haughty strain,  
Yet meanly fear'st to let the scattered mould  
Cover the dead? What mischiefs can ensue?  
Will they, when buried, undermine your walls  
Or in earth's hollow caves beget a race  
Of children able to avenge their wrongs?  
Absurdly hast thou lavished many words  
In base and groundless terrors. O ye fools,  
Go make yourselves acquainted with the woes  
To which mankind are subject. Human life  
Is but a conflict : some there are whose bliss  
Approaches them, while that of others waits  
Till a long future season, others taste  
Of present joys : capricious Fortune sports  
With all her anxious votaries ; through a hope  
Of better times to her the wretched pay  
Their homage ; he who is already blest  
Extols her matchless bounty to the skies,  
And trembles lest the veering gale forsake him.  
But we, who know by what precarious tenure  
We hold her gifts, should bear a trifling wrong

With patience, and, if we the narrow bounds  
Of justice overleap, abstain from crimes  
Which harm our country. If thou ask, what  
means

This prelude? I reply: To us who wish  
To see them laid in earth with holy rites,  
Consign the weltering corpses of the slain,  
Else is it clear what mischiefs must ensue,  
I will go forth, and bury them by force.  
For 'mong the Greeks it never shall be said  
This ancient law, which from the gods received  
Its sanction, though transmitted down to me  
And to the city where Pandion ruled,  
Was disregarded.

*Chorus.* Courage! While the light  
Of justice is thy guide, thou shalt escape  
Th' invidious censures of a busy crowd.

*Theban Herald.* May I comprise in a few words the whole  
Of our debate?

*Theseus.* Speak whatsoe'er thou wilt:  
For no discreet restraint thy tongue e'er knew.

*Theban Herald.* The corpses of those Argive youths from  
Thebes

You never shall remove.

*Theseus.* Now to my answer  
Attend, if thou art so disposed.

*Theban Herald.* I will:  
For in your turn I ought to hear you speak.

*Theseus.* On the deceased will I bestow a grave,  
When I have borne their relics from the land  
Washed by Asopus' stream.

*Theban Herald.* In combat first  
Great hazards must you brave.

*Theseus.* Unnumbered toils  
Have I ere now in other wars endured.

*Theban Herald.* Was there to you transmitted from your sire  
Sufficient strength to cope with every foe?

*Theseus.* With every villain: for on virtuous deeds  
No punishment would I inflict.

*Theban Herald.* Both you  
And Athens have been wont in various matters  
To interfere.

*Theseus.*

To many a bold emprise

She owes the prosperous fortunes she enjoys.

*Theban Herald.* Come on, that soon as you attempt to enter

Our gates the Theban lance may lay you low.

*Theseus.* Can any valiant champion from the teeth

Of a slain dragon spring?

*Theban Herald.*

This to your cost

Shall you experience, though you still retain

The rashness which untutored youth inspires.

*Theseus.* By thy presumptuous language thou my soul

To anger canst not rouse : but from this land

Depart, and carry back those empty words

With which thou hither cam'st : for we in vain

Have held this conference.

[*Exit THEBAN HERALD.*

Now must we collect

Our numerous infantry in arms arrayed,

With all who mount the chariot, and the steed

Caparisoned, his mouth distilling foam,

Urge to the Theban realm ; for I will march

Up to the sevenfold gates by Cadmus reared

This arm sustaining a protended spear,

And be myself the herald. But stay here,

Adrastus, I command thee ; nor with mine

Blend thy disastrous fortunes : for the host

I under happier auspices will lead

To the embattled field, renowned in war,

And furnished with the spear to which I owe

My glories. I need only one thing more,

Help from the gods, who are the friends of justice

For where all these advantages concur

They to our better cause ensure success.

But valour's of no service to mankind

Unless propitious Jove his influence lend.

[*Exit THESEUS.*

*Adrastus.* Unhappy mothers of those hapless chiefs,

How doth pale fear disturb this anxious breast !

*Chorus.* What new alarm is this thou giv'st ?

*Adrastus.*

The host

Of Pallas our great contest will decide

*Chorus.* By force of arms, or conference, dost thou mean ?

*Adrastus.* 'Twere better thus ; but slaughter, the delight

Of Mars, and battle, through the Theban streets,  
With many a beaten bosom shall resound.

*Chorus.* Wretch that I am ! What cause shall I assign  
For such calamities ?

*Adrastus.* But some reverse  
Of fortune may again lay low the man  
Who, swollen with gay prosperity, exults ;  
This gives me confidence.

*Chorus.* Th' immortal gods  
Thou represent'st as if those gods were just.

*Adrastus.* For who but they o'er each event preside ?

*Chorus.* Heaven's partial dispensations to mankind  
I oft contemplate.

*Adrastus.* Thou thy better judgment  
To thy past fears dost sacrifice. Revenge  
Calls forth revenge, and slaughter is repaid  
By slaughter ; for the gods into the souls  
Of evil men pernicious thoughts infuse,  
And all things to their destined period guide.

## ODE.

### I.

*Chorus.* O could I reach yon field with turrets crowned  
And leave thy spring Callichore behind.

*Adrastus.* Heaven give thee pinions to outstrip the wind !

*Chorus.* Waft me to Thebes for its two streams renowned.

*Adrastus.* There might'st thou view the spirits of the slain  
Whose corpses welter on the hostile plain.

Still dubious are the dread awards of fate.

But the undaunted king of this domain,

In yon embattled field what dangers may await.

### II.

*Chorus.* On you, ye pitying gods, again I call,  
In you my trust I place, your might revere,  
And with this hope dispel each anxious fear.  
O Jove, whom love's soft bandage did enthrall,  
When beauteous Io met thy fond embrace,  
Erst to a heifer changed, from whom we trace  
Our origin, make Argos still thy care.  
Thy image rescuing from its loathed disgrace,  
To the funereal pyre these heroes will we bear.

MESSENGER, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

*Messenger.* With many acceptable tidings fraught  
 I come, ye dames, and am myself just 'scaped  
 (For I was taken prisoner in that battle,  
 When the seven squadrons, led by the deceased,  
 Upon the banks of Dirce's current fought) ;  
 It is my joyful errand to relate  
 The conquest Theseus gained : but your fatigue  
 Of asking tedious questions will I spare ;  
 For to that Capaneus, th' ill-fated chief  
 Whom Jove with flaming thunderbolts transpierced,  
 Was I a servant.

*Chorus.* O my friend, you bring  
 A favourable account of your return,  
 And Theseus' mighty deeds : but if the host  
 Of generous Athens too be safe, most welcome  
 Will be the whole of what you now relate.

*Messenger.* 'Tis safe ; and what Adrastus strove t' effect,  
 When from the stream of Inachus he led  
 His forces, and against the Theban towers  
 Waged war, is now accomplished.

*Chorus.* But relate  
 How Ægeus' son with his intrepid comrades  
 Jove's trophies reared, for you the engagement saw,  
 And us who were not there can entertain.

*Messenger.* In a right line the solar beams began  
 To strike the earth ; upon a tower I stood  
 Commanding a wide prospect o'er the field,  
 Above the gate Electra. Thence I marked  
 The warriors of three tribes to the assault  
 Advancing in three several bands, arrayed  
 In ponderous armour, to Ismenos' stream  
 The first division, I am told, its ranks  
 Extended ; the illustrious son of Ægeus,  
 Their monarch, was among them ; round their chief  
 The natives of Cecropia's ancient realm  
 Were stationed ; the Paralians, armed with spears,  
 Close to the fount of Mars ; on either flank  
 Of battle stood the cavalry disposed  
 In equal numbers, and the brazen cars  
 Screened by Amphion's venerable tomb.

Meanwhile the Theban forces were drawn forth  
 Without the bulwarks, placing in their rear  
 The bodies which they fought for ; fiery steed'  
 To steed ; to chariot, chariot stood opposed.  
 But Theseus' herald, in a voice so loud  
 That all might hear, cried out, " Be mute, ye people ;  
 Attend in strictest silence, O ye troops  
 Who spring from Cadmus ! We are come to claim  
 The bodies of the slain, which 'tis our wish  
 To bury, in compliance with the laws  
 Established through all Greece : we for their deaths  
 Require not an atonement." To these words  
 No answer by his herald Creon gave,  
 Firm under arms the silent warrior stood.  
 They who the reins of adverse chariots held  
 Began the battle, hurrying through the ranks  
 With glowing wheels, nor shunned the lifted spear ;  
 Some fought with swords, while others urged their  
 steeds

Again into the fray, encountering those  
 Who had repelled them. But when Phorbas, leader  
 Of the Athenian cavalry, observed  
 The chariots of the foe in throngs advance,  
 He and the chieftains of the Theban horse  
 In the encounter mingled, and by turns  
 Prevailed and were discomfited. I speak not  
 From fame alone, but what myself beheld,  
 For I was present where the chariots fought,  
 And the brave chiefs who in those chariots rode.  
 In an assemblage of so many horrors,  
 I know not which to mention first ; how thick  
 The clouds of dust which blackened all the sky  
 Or those who, tangled in the stubborn reins,  
 Were dragged at random o'er the field, and bathed  
 In their own gore, their chariots overthrown  
 Or broken ; others headlong from their seat  
 Were violently dashed upon the ground,  
 And breathed their last amid their splintered wheels.  
 When Creon saw his cavalry prevail,  
 Hastily snatching up a pointed spear,  
 Onward he marched impetuous, lest his troops  
 Should lose their courage ; nor through abject fear.



Did Theseus' bands recoil : without delay  
 On to the combat, sheathed in glittering arms,  
 The dauntless chief advanced, and now began  
 In the main body of each adverse host  
 A universal conflict ; with the slain  
 The slayer mingled lay ; while clamorous shouts  
 Were heard from those that to their comrades cried :  
 "Strike ! With your spears oppose Erectheus' race."  
 A legion sprung from the slain dragon's teeth  
 With courage fought, and pressed on our left wing  
 So hard that it gave way, while by our right  
 Discomfited the Theban squadrons fled.  
 Thus in an equal balance long remained  
 The fate of war, but here again our chief  
 Deserved applause, for he not only gained  
 All that advantage his victorious troops  
 Could give him, but proceeded to that wing  
 Which had been worsted : with so loud a shout  
 That earth resounded, "Valiant youths," he cried,  
 "If ye repel not those portended spears  
 Of the fierce dragon's brood, Minerva's city  
 Is utterly destroyed." These words infused  
 New confidence in all th' Athenian host.  
 Then, snatching up the ponderous club he won  
 Near Epidaurus, with his utmost force  
 He swang that formidable weapon round,  
 Severing, like tender poppies from the stalks,  
 At the same stroke, their necks and helméd heads,  
 Yet scarcely could he put to flight the troops  
 Of Argos. With a shout, then vaulting high,  
 I clapped my hands, while to the gates they ran.  
 Through every street re-echoed mingled shrieks  
 Of young and old, who by their fears impelled  
 Crowded the temples. But when he with ease  
 The fortress might have entered, Theseus checked  
 The ardour of his host, and said he came  
 Not to destroy the city, but redeem  
 The bodies of those slaughtered chiefs. A man  
 Like this should be selected for the leader  
 Of armies, who 'midst dangers perséveres  
 Undaunted, and abhors the madding pride  
 Of those who, flushed with triumph, while they seek

To mount the giddy ladder's topmost round,  
Forfeit that bliss they else might have enjoyed.

*Chorus.* Now I have seen this unexpected day,  
I deem that there are gods, and feel my woes  
Alleviated since these audacious miscreants  
Have suffered their deserts.

*Adrastus.* Why do they speak

Of wretched man as wise? On thee, O Jove,  
Our all depends, and whatsoe'er thou wilt  
We execute. The power of Argos seemed  
Too great to be resisted: we relied  
On our own numbers and superior might.  
Hence, when Eteocles began to treat  
Of peace, though he demanded moderate terms,  
Disdaining to accept it, we rushed headlong  
Into perdition: while the foolish race  
Of Cadmus, like some beggar who obtains  
Immense possessions suddenly, grew proud,  
And pride was the forerunner of their ruin.  
Mortals, devoid of sense, who strain too hard  
Your feeble bow, and after ye have suffered  
Unnumbered evils justly, to the voice  
Of friends still deaf, are guided by events;  
And cities, who by treaty might avert  
Impending mischief, choose to make the sword,  
Rather than reason, umpire of your strife.  
But whither do these vain reflections tend?  
What I now wish to learn is, by what means  
Thou didst escape: I into other matters  
Will then make full inquiry.

*Messenger.* While the tumult

Of battle in the city still prevailed,  
I through that gate came forth by which the troops  
Had entered.

*Adrastus.* But did ye bear off the bodies

Of those slain chiefs for whom the war arose?

*Messenger.* Who o'er seven noble houses did preside.

*Adrastus.* What's this thou saidst? But where are all the rest  
Of the deceased, an undistinguished crowd?

*Messenger.* Lodged in a tomb amid Cithæron's vale.

*Adrastus.* Beyond or on this side the mount? And who  
Performed this mournful duty?

*Messenger.*

Theseus' self :

The rock Eleutheris o'ershades their grave.

*Adrastus.* But as for those he hath not yet interred,  
Where did he leave their corpses ?*Messenger.*

Near at hand.

For every duty that affection prompts  
Is placed within our reach.*Adrastus.*

Did slaves remove

The dead with their ignoble hands ?

*Messenger.*

No slave

Performed that office : if you had been present  
You would have cried, " What love doth Theseus bear  
To our slain friends ! " He laved the grisly wounds  
Of these unhappy youths, the couch prepared,  
And o'er their bodies threw the decent veil.*Adrastus.* Most heavy burden ! too unseemly task !*Messenger.* What shame to feeble mortals can arise

From those calamities which none escape ?

*Adrastus.* Ah ! would to Heaven that I with them had died !*Messenger.* In vain you weep, and cause full many a tear  
To stream from these your followers.*Adrastus.*

Here I stand

As the chief mourner, though by them, alas !  
Have I been taught to grieve. Of that no more.  
With hands uplifted I advance to meet  
The dead, and, pouring forth a votive dirge  
To soothe hell's grisly potentate, once more  
Will I accost those friends, of whom deprived  
I wail my solitude. This only loss  
Man never can retrieve, the fleeting breath  
Of life ; but the possessions we impair  
By various means may be again acquired.

[Exit MESSENGER.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Dashed are our joys with mingled pains ;  
While Athens and its leaders ciam  
Fresh wreaths of laurel with augmented fame ;

Doomed to behold the pale remains  
Of my loved children, bitter, pleasing sight,  
I after grief shall feel an unforeseen delight.

## II.

O that old Time's paternal care  
Had kept me from the nuptial yoke.  
What need had I of sons? This grievous stroke  
Could never then have been my share :  
But now I see perpetual cause to mourn ;  
My children, from these arms for ever are ye torn.

But lo ! the corpses of those breathless youths,  
Are borne in pomp funereal. Would to Heaven  
I with my sons might perish, and descend  
The shades of Pluto !

*Adrastus.* Matrons, o'er the dead,  
Pale tenants of the realms beneath, now vent  
Your loudest groans, and to my groans reply.

*Chorus.* O children, whom in bitterness of soul,  
With a maternal fondness, we accost ;  
To thee, my breathless son, to thee I speak.

*Adrastus.* Ah me ! my woes !

*Chorus.* We have endured, alas !  
Afflictions the most grievous.

*Adrastus.* O ye dames  
Of my loved Argos, view ye not my fate ?

*Chorus.* Me, miserable and childless they behold.

*Adrastus.* Bring to their hapless friend each bloody corse  
Of those famed chiefs, dishonourably slain,  
And by the hands of cowards : when they fell,  
The battle ended.

*Chorus.* O let me embrace  
My dearest sons, and in these arms sustain !

*Adrastus.* Thou from these hands receiv'st them : such  
weight

Of anguish is too grievous to be borne.

*Chorus.* By their fond mothers, you forget to add.  
Wretch that I am !

*Adrastus.* Ah, listen to my voice.

*Chorus.* Both to yourself and us these complaints belong.

*Adrastus.* Would to the gods that the victorious troops  
Of Thebes had slain and laid me low in dust !

*Chorus.* O that in wedlock I had ne'er been joined  
\* To any lord !

*Adrastus.* Ye miserable mothers  
Of those brave youths, who for their country died,  
An ocean of calamity behold.

*Chorus.* We, hopeless mourners, with our nails have torn  
These bleeding visages, and on our heads  
Strewn ashes.

*Adrastus.* Ah ! ah me ! Thou opening ground  
Swallow me up. O scatter me, ye storms ;  
And may Jove's lightning on this head descend !

*Chorus.* You witnessed in an evil hour the nuptials  
Of your two daughters, in an evil hour  
Apollo's mystic oracles obeyed.  
The wife whom you have taken to your arms  
Is that destructive fiend who left the house  
Of Œdipus, and chose with you to dwell.

THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

*Theseus.* The questions I designed to have proposed  
To you, ye noble matrons, when ye uttered  
Your loud complaints amidst th' assembled host,  
I will omit, and mean to search no farther  
Into the moving history of your woes.  
But now of thee, Adrastus, I inquire,  
Whence sprung these chiefs whose prowess did  
transcend  
That of all other mortals ? Thou art wise,  
And these transactions, which full well thou know'st,  
Canst to our youthful citizens unfold.  
For, of their bold achievements, which exceed  
The power of language to express, myself  
Have been a witness, when they strove to storm  
The Theban walls. But lest I should provoke  
Thy laughter, this one question will I spare ;  
With what brave champion in th' embattled field  
Each fought, and from the weapon of what foe  
Received the deadly wound : for these vain tales  
But serve an equal folly to display  
In those who either hear them, or relate,

Should he who mingles in the thickest fray,  
 From either army, while unnumbered spears  
 Before his eyes are thrown, distinctly strive  
 To ascertain what dauntless warrior launched  
 With surest aim the missile death. These questions  
 I cannot ask, nor credit those who dare  
 To make such rash assertions. For the man  
 Who to his foes in combat stands opposed  
 Can scarce discern enough to act the part  
 Which his own duty calls for.

*Adrastus.*

Now attend,

For no unwelcome task have you imposed  
 On me, of praising those departed friends,  
 Of whom with truth and justice I would speak.  
 Do you behold yon hero's graceful form,  
 Through which the bolt of Jove hath forced its way?  
 This youth is Capaneus, who, though the fortune  
 Which he possessed was ample, ne'er grew vain  
 Through wealth, nor of himself more highly deemed  
 Than if he had been poor, but shunned the man  
 Who proudly glories in a sumptuous board,  
 And treats a frugal competence with scorn;  
 For he maintained that life's chief good consists not  
 In the voracious glutton's full repast,  
 But that a moderate portion will suffice.  
 In his attachments still was he sincere,  
 And zealous for the good of those he loved,  
 Whether at hand or absent still the same;  
 Small is the number of such friends as these;  
 His manners were not counterfeit, his lips  
 Distilled sweet courtesy, and left not aught  
 That he had promised, either to the slave,  
 Or citizen of Argos, unperformed.  
 Eteocles I next proceed to name,  
 For every virtuous practice much renowned,  
 Small were the fortunes of this noble youth,  
 But in the Argive region he enjoyed  
 Abundant honours: though his wealthier friends  
 Oft sought to have presented him with gold,  
 His doors were closed against that specious bane,  
 Lest he might seem to act a servile part,  
 By riches made a bondsman: he abhorred

The guilt of individuals, not the land  
Which nourished them : to cities no reproach  
Is due because their rulers are corrupt.  
Such also was Hippomedon, the third  
Of these illustrious chiefs ; while yet a boy,  
To the delights the tuneful Muses yield,  
A life of abject softness, he disdained  
To turn aside : a tenant of the fields,  
His nature he to the severest toils  
Inuring, took delight in manly deeds,  
With fiery coursers issuing to the chase,  
Or twanged with nervous hands the sounding bow,  
And showed a generous eagerness to make  
His vigour useful to his native land.  
There lies the huntress Atalanta's son,  
Parthenopæus, by a beauteous form  
Distinguished : in Arcadia was he born,  
But, journeying thence to Inachus' stream,  
In Argos nurtured ; having there received  
His education, first, as is the duty  
Of strangers in the country where they dwell,  
He never made a foe, nor to the state  
Became obnoxious, waged no strife of words  
(Whence citizens and foreigners offend),  
But, stationed in the van of battle, fought  
To guard the land as if he had been born  
\* An Argive, and when'er the city prospered  
Rejoiced, but was with deepest anguish stung  
If a reverse of fortune it endured :  
Though many lovers, many blooming nymphs  
To him their hearts devoted, he maintained  
A blameless conduct. The great praises due  
To Tydeus I concisely will express ;  
Though rude of speech, yet terrible in arms,  
Devising various stratagems, surpassed  
In prudence by his brother Meleager,  
By warlike arts he gained an equal name,  
Finding sweet music in the crash of shields :  
Nature endued him with the strongest thirst  
For glory and for riches ; but his soul  
In actions, not in words, its force displayed.  
From this account, O Theseus, wonder not

Such generous youths before the Theban towers  
 Feared not to meet an honourable death.  
 For education is the source whence springs  
 Ingenuous shame, and every man whose habits  
 Have erst been virtuous, not without a blush,  
 Becomes a dastard : courage may be taught ;  
 Just as a tender infant learns to speak  
 And listen to the words he comprehends not ;  
 But he such wholesome lessons treasures up  
 Till he is old. From this example train  
 Your progeny in honour's arduous paths.

*Chorus.* I educated thee, my hapless son,  
 Thee in this womb sustained, and childbirth pangs  
 For thee endured ; but now hath Pluto seized  
 The fruit of all my toils, and I, who bore  
 An offspring, am abandoned to distress,  
 Without a prop to stay my sinking age.

*Adrastus.* The gods themselves in louder strains extol  
 Oicleus' illustrious son, whom yet alive  
 They with his rapid coursers snatched away  
 And bore into the caverns of the earth.

*Theseus.* Nor shall I utter falsehood while my tongue  
 Recounts the praise of Polynices, son  
 Of *Ædipus* ; for as his guest the chief  
 Received me, ere, a voluntary exile,  
 Abandoning his native city reared  
 By Cadmus, to the Argive realm he went.  
 But know'st thou how I wish thou shouldst dispose  
 Of their remains ?

*Adrastus.* All that I know is this,  
 Whatever you direct shall be obeyed.

*Theseus.* As for that Capaneus, who by the flame  
 Launched from Jove's hand was smitten—

*Adrastus.* Would you burn  
 His corse apart as sacred ?

*Theseus.* Even so.  
 But all the rest on one funereal pyre.

*Adrastus.* Where mean you to erect his separate tomb ?

*Theseus.* I near these hapless youths have fixed the spot  
 For his interment.

*Adrastus.* To your menial train  
 Must this unwelcome office be consigned.



*Theseus.* But to those other warriors will I pay  
Due honours. Now advance, and hither bring  
Their corses.

*Adrastus.* To your children, wretched matrons,  
Draw near.

*Theseus.* Adrastus, sure thou hast proposed  
What cannot be expedient.

*Adrastus.* Why restrain  
The mothers from their breathless sons' embrace?

*Theseus.* Should they behold their children thus deformed,  
They would expire with grief. The face we loved,  
Soon as pale death invades its bloom, becomes  
A loathsome object. Why wouldst thou increase  
Their sorrows?

*Adrastus.* You convince me. Ye must wait  
With patience; for expedient are the counsels  
Which Theseus gives. But when we have consumed

In blazing pyres their corses, ye their bones  
Must take away. Why forge the brazen spear,  
Unhappy mortals, why retaliate slaughter  
With slaughter? O desist; no more engrossed  
By fruitless labours, in your cities dwell,  
Peaceful yourselves, and through the nations round  
A general peace diffusing. For the term  
Of human life is short, and should be passed  
With every comfort, not in anxious toils.

[*Exeunt THESEUS and ADRASTUS,*

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

No more a mother's happy name  
Shall crown my fortunes or exalt my fame,  
'Midst Argive matrons blest with generous heirs.  
Of all the parent's hopes bereft,  
By Dian, patroness of childbirth left,  
Ordained to lead a life of cares,  
To wandering solitude consigned,  
I like a cloud am driven before the howling wind.

## II.

We, seven unhappy dames, deplore  
 The seven brave sons we erst exulting bore,  
 Illustrious champions who for Argos bled :  
 Forlorn and childless, drenched in tears,  
 Downward I hasten to the vale of years,  
 But am not numbered with the dead  
 Or living : a peculiar state  
 Is mine, on me attends an unexampled fate.

## III.

For me nought now remains except to weep :  
 In my son's house are left behind  
 Some tokens ; well I know those tresses shorn  
 Which no wreath shall ever bind,  
 No auspicious songs adorn,  
 And golden-haired Apollo scorn ;  
 With horror from a broken sleep  
 Roused by grief at early morn  
 My crimson vest in gushing tears I steep.

But I the pyre of Capaneus behold  
 Already blazing, near his sacred tomb  
 Heaped high ; and placed without the fane, those  
 gifts  
 Which Theseus' self appropriates to the dead :  
 Evadne too, the consort of that chief,  
 Who by the thunderbolts of Jove was slain,  
 Daughter of noble Iphis, is at hand.  
 Why doth she stand upon the topmost ridge  
 Of yon ærial rock, which overlooks  
 This dome, as if she hither bent her way ?

EVADNE, CHORUS.

ODE.

## I.

*Evadne.*    What cheering beams of radiant light  
 Hyperion darted from his car,  
 And how did Cynthia's lamp shine bright,  
 While in the skies each glittering star

Rode swiftly through the drear abodes of night,  
 When Argive youths a festive throng  
 T' accompany the nuptial song  
 For Capaneus and me awaked the lyre?  
 Now frantic hither am I borne  
 Resolved to share my lord's funereal pyre,  
 With him to enter the same tomb,  
 End with him this life forlorn,  
 In Pluto's realms, the Stygian gloom.  
 If Heaven assent, the most delightful death  
 Is when with those we love we mix our parting breath.  
*Chorus.* Near to its mouth you stand and overlook  
 The blazing pyre, Jove's treasure, there is lodged  
 Your husband whom his thunderbolts transpierced.

## II.

*Evadne.* Life's utmost goal I now behold,  
 For I have finished my career :  
 With steadfast purpose uncontrolled  
 My steps doth fortune hither steer.  
 In the pursuit of honest fame grown bold,  
 Am I determined from this steep  
 Into the flames beneath to leap,  
 And mine with my dear husband's ashes blend ;  
 I to the couch of Proserpine,  
 With him in death united, will descend.  
 Thee in the grave I'll ne'er betray :  
 Life and wedlock I resign  
 May some happier spousal day  
 At Argos for Evadne's race remain,  
 And every wedded pair such constant loves maintain.  
*Chorus.* But, lo, 'tis he ! I view your aged sire,  
 The venerable Iphis, who approaches  
 As a fresh witness of those strange designs  
 Which yet he knows not, and will grieve to hear.

## IPHIS, CHORUS, EVADNE.

*Iphis.* O most unhappy ! Hither am I come,  
 A miserable old man, with twofold griefs  
 By Heaven afflicted ; to his native land,  
 The body of Eteoclus, my son,  
 Slain by a Theban javelin, to convey,

And seek my daughter, with impetuous step  
 Who rushed from her apartment ; in the bond  
 Of wedlock she to Capaneus was joined,  
 And wishes to accompany in death  
 Her husband ; for a time she in my house  
 Was guarded, but since I no longer watched her,  
 'Midst the confusion of our present ills  
 She 'scaped ; but we have reason to suspect  
 That she is here ; inform us, if ye know.

*Evadne.* Why do you question them ? Here on this rock  
 I, O my father, o'er the blazing pyre  
 Of Capaneus stand, hovering like a bird.

*Iphis.* What gale hath borne thee hither ? Or what means  
 That robe, my daughter ? Wherefore, from thy home  
 Departing, to this region didst thou fly ?

*Evadne.* 'Twould but exasperate you to be informed  
 Of my intentions : therefore, O my sire,  
 Am I unwilling you should hear.

*Iphis.* What schemes  
 Are these which thy own father may not know ?

*Evadne.* In you I should not find an equal judge  
 Of my intentions.

*Iphis.* But on what account  
 Thy person with that habit hast thou graced ?

*Evadne.* A splendid action, O my sire, the robe  
 I wear denotes.

*Iphis.* Ill-suited is a garb  
 So costly to the matron who bewails  
 Her husband's death.

*Evadne.* For an unheard-of purpose  
 In gay habiliments am I attired.

*Iphis.* Why stand'st thou near the grave and blazing pyre ?

*Evadne.* Hither I come to gain a mighty conquest.

*Iphis.* O'er whom wouldst thou prevail ? I wish to know.

*Evadne.* O'er every woman whom the sun beholds.

*Iphis.* By Pallas in the labours of the loom  
 Instructed, or with a judicious soul,  
 That best of gifts endued ?

*Evadne.* With dauntless courage  
 For in the grave I with my breathless lord  
 Shall be united.

*Iphis.* What is it thou say'st ?

Or with what views a riddle thus absurd  
Hast thou propounded?

*Evadne.* Hence into the pyre  
Of Capaneus will I leap down.

*Iphis.* My daughter,  
Before the multitude forbear to hold  
This language.

*Evadne.* There is nothing I have said  
But what I wish that every Argive knew.

*Iphis.* Yet will I not consent thou should'st fulfil  
Thy desperate purpose.

*Evadne* [*as she is throwing herself from the Rock*].

It is all the same :

Nor can you now by stretching forth your hand  
Stop my career. Already have I taken  
The fatal leap, and hence descend, with joy  
Though not indeed to you, yet to myself,  
And to my lord, with whose remains I blaze.

*Chorus.* Thou hast committed an atrocious deed,  
O woman.

*Iphis.* Wretched me ! I am undone,  
Ye dames of Argos.

*Chorus.* Horrid are these ills  
Which thou endur'st, the deed thine eyes behold  
Is the most daring.

*Iphis.* No man can ye find  
Than me more miserable.

*Chorus.* O wretch ! A portion  
Of Ædipus' fortunes was reserved  
For thee in thy old age ; thou too, my city,  
Art visited by the severest woes.

*Iphis.* Why was this privilege, alas ! denied  
To mortals, twice to flourish in the bloom  
Of youth, and for a second time grow old ?  
For in our houses, we, if aught is found  
To have been ill contrived, amend the fault  
Which our maturer judgment hath descried ;  
While each important error in our life  
Admits of no reform : but if with youth  
And ripe old age we twice had been indulged,  
Each devious step that marked our first career  
We in our second might set right. For children,

Seeing that others had them, much I wished,  
And pined away with vehement desire ;  
But if I had already felt these pangs,  
And from my own experience learnt how great  
Is the calamity to a fond father  
To be bereft of all his hopeful race,  
I into such distress had never fallen  
As now o'erwhelms me, who begot a youth  
Distinguished by his courage, and of him  
Am now deprived. No more. But what remains  
For me—wretch that I am ? Shall I return  
To my own home, view many houses left  
Without inhabitants, and waste the dregs  
Of life in hopeless anguish, or repair  
To the abode of Capaneus, with joy  
By me frequented while my daughter lived ?  
But she is now no more, who loved to kiss  
My furrowed cheeks and stroked this hoary head.  
Nought can delight us more than the attention  
Which to her aged sire a daughter pays :  
Though our male progeny have souls endued  
With courage far superior, yet less gently  
Do they these soothing offices perform.  
Will ye not quickly drag me to my home,  
And in some dungeon's gloomy hold confine,  
To wear away these aged limbs by famine ?  
Me, what, alas ! can it avail to touch  
My daughter's bones ! What hatred do I bear  
To thee, O irresistible old age !  
Them, too, my soul abhors who vainly strive  
To lengthen out our little span of life ;  
By th' easy vehicle, the downy couch,  
And by the boasted aid of magic song,  
Labouring to turn aside from his career  
Remorseless death : when they who have no longer  
The strength required to serve their native land  
Should vanish, and to younger men give place.

*Semichorus.* Lo, there the bones of my slain sons, whose  
                corse  
Already in funereal pyres have blazed,  
Are borne along. Support a weak old woman :  
The pangs which for my children's loss I feel

Deprive me of all strength. I long have mourned,  
And am enervated by many griefs.

\* Can any curse severer be devised  
For mortals than to see their children dead?

*Boy.* O my unhappy mother, from the flames  
I bear my father's relics, which my sorrows  
Have made more weighty : this small urn contains  
All my possessions.

*Semichorus.* Why dost thou convey  
The sad and pleasing cause of many tears  
To the afflicted mothers of the slain,  
A little heap of ashes in the stead  
Of those who in Mycenæ were renowned?

*Boy.* But I, a wretched orphan, and bereft  
Of my unhappy father, shall receive  
For my whole portion a deserted house,  
Torn from the tutelary arms of him  
To whom I owe my birth.

*Semichorus.* Where, where are those  
Whom sorrowing I brought forth, whom at my breast  
With a maternal tenderness I reared,  
Their slumbers watched, and sweetest kisses gave?

*Boy.* Your children are departed, they exist  
No longer, O my mother ; they are gone  
For ever, by devouring flames consumed ;  
In the mid-air they float, borne on light wind  
To Pluto. O my sire, for sure thou hear'st  
Thy children's lamentations, shall I bear  
The shield hereafter to avenge thy death?

*Iphis.* May the time come, my son, when the just gods  
To me shall for thy valiant father's death  
A full atonement grant : that grievous loss  
In this torn heart yet rankles unappeased.

*Boy.* I our hard fortunes have enough bewailed,  
My sorrows are sufficient. I will take  
My stand where chosen Grecian chiefs, arrayed  
In brazen arms, with transport will receive me  
Th' avenger of my sire. E'en now these eyes  
Behold thee, O my father, on my cheeks  
A kiss imprinting, though the winds have borne  
Thy noble exhortations far away,  
But thou hast left two mourners here behind,

Me and my mother : venerable man,  
No time can from thy wounded soul efface  
The grief thou for thy children feel'st.

*Iphis.* The load

Of anguish which I suffer is so great  
That it hath quite o'ercome me. Hither bring,  
And let me clasp those ashes to my breast.

*Boy.* These bitter lamentations have I heard  
With streaming tears ; they rend my inmost soul.

*Iphis.* Thou, O my son, art lost ; and I no more  
Thy mother's dear, dear image shall behold.

THESEUS, ADRASTUS, IPHIS, CHORUS.

*Theseus.* Behold ye, O Adrastus, and ye dames  
Of Argive race these children, in their hands  
Bearing the relics of their valiant sires,  
By me redeemed ? Athens and I, these gifts  
On you bestow : still are ye bound to cherish  
A memory of those benefits, obtained  
Through my mysterious spear. To all I speak  
In the same terms. With honour due repay  
This city, and the kindness which from us  
Ye have experienced to your children's children  
Transmit through latest ages. But let Jove  
Bear witness, with what tokens of our bounty  
Ye from this realm depart.

*Adrastus.* Full well we know  
What favours you, O Theseus, have conferred  
Upon the Argive land, when most it needed  
A benefactor ; hence will we retain  
Such gratitude as time shall ne'er efface.  
For we, the generous treatment which from you  
We have received, as largely should requite.

*Theseus.* Is there ought else I can bestow ?

*Adrastus.* All hail ;  
For you and Athens every bliss deserve.

*Theseus.* May Heaven this wish accomplish ! and mayst thou,  
My friend, with equal happiness be crowned.

MINERVA, THESEUS, ADRASTUS, IPHIS, CHORUS.

*Minerva.* Attend, O Theseus, to Minerva's words,  
And thou shalt learn what thou must do to serve



This country ; give not to the boys these bones  
To bear to Argos, on such easy terms  
Dismissing them. But to requite the toils  
Of thee and of thy city, first exact  
A solemn oath, and let Adrastus swear,  
For he, its king, for the whole Argive realm  
Is qualified to answer, and be this  
The form prescribed : " Ne'er will Mycene's sons  
Into this land a hostile squadron lead,  
But hence, with their protended spears, repel  
Each fierce invader." If the sacred oath  
They impiously should violate, and march  
Against thy city, pray that utter ruin  
May light on Argos, and its perjured state.  
But where the gods require that thou shalt slay  
The victims, I will tell thee ; in thy palace  
On brazen feet a massive tripod stands  
Which erst Alcides, when the walls of Troy  
He from their basis had o'erthrown, and rushed  
New labours to accomplish, gave command  
Close to the Pythian altar should be placed.  
When on this tripod thou hast slain three sheep,  
The destined victims, in its hollow rim  
Inscribe the oath ; then to that god consign  
Who o'er the Delphic realm presides : such tablet  
To Greece shall testify the league ye form.  
But in the bowels of the earth conceal  
The knife with which the victims thou hast slain,  
For this, when shown, should they hereafter come,  
With armed bands, this city to assail,  
Will strike Mycene's warriors with dismay,  
And their return embitter. When these rites  
Thou hast performed, the ashes of the dead  
Send from this region, and to them assign  
That grove in which their corpses have by fire  
Been purified, the spot where meet three roads  
Sacred to th' Isthmian goddess. This to thee,  
O Theseus, have I spoken : to the boys  
Who spring from those slain Argive chiefs I add  
Ismenos' city, soon, as ye attain  
Maturer years, shall ye in ruin lay,  
Retaliating the slaughter of your sires ;

Thou too, Ægialeus, a youthful chief,  
 Shalt in thy father's stead command the host,  
 And marching from Ætolia's realm, the son  
 Of Tydeus, Diomedé by name ; the down  
 No sooner shall o'erspread your blooming cheeks  
 Than with a band of Argive warriors clad  
 In glittering armour, with impetuous rage,  
 Ye the seven Theban turrets shall assail ;  
 Them, in your wrath, shall ye, in manhood's prime,  
 Like whelps of lions visit, and lay waste  
 The city. What have I foretold, ere long  
 Will be accomplished. By applauding Greece  
 Called the Epigoni, ye shall become  
 A theme for your descendants' choral songs,  
 Such squadrons ye to battle shall lead forth  
 Favoured by righteous Jove.

*Theseus.* Thy dread injunctions,  
 Minerva, awful queen, will I obey :  
 For I, while thou direct'st me, cannot err.  
 I from Adrastus will exact that oath,  
 Deign only thou to guide my steps aright,  
 For to our city if thou prov'st a friend  
 We shall enjoy blest safety.

*Chorus.* Let us go,  
 Adrastus, and eternal friendship swear  
 To Theseus and his city, for the toils  
 They have endured our grateful reverence claim.

## HERCULES DISTRACTED

### PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AMPHITRYON.

MEGARA.

CHORUS OF THEBAN OLD

MEN.

HERCULES.

LYCUS.

IRIS.

A FIEND.

MESSENGER.

THESEUS.

*Scene.*—BEFORE THE ALTAR OF JUPITER, AT THE ENTRANCE  
OF THE HOUSE OF HERCULES IN THEBES.

AMPHITRYON, MEGARA.

*Amphitryon.* Is there on earth, a stranger to the man  
Who shared the same auspicious nuptial bed  
With Jove, Amphitryon born at Argos, sprung  
From Perseus' son Alcæus, me the sire  
Of Hercules? He in these regions dwelt,  
Where from the soil a helmed crop arose ;  
Mars, a small number of that race, preserved,  
Whose children's children people Cadmus' city.  
Hence Creon king of Thebes, Menæceus' son,  
Derives his birth, and Creon is the sire  
Of this unhappy Megara, to grace  
Whose hymeneal pomp, each Theban erst  
Attuned the jocund lute, into my house  
When Hercules conducted her. But leaving  
This realm where I resided, and his consort  
And kindred, my son chose to fix his seat  
Within the walls of Argos, of that city  
Erected by the Cyclops, whence I fled  
Stained with Electryon's gore : but to alleviate  
My woes, and in his native land obtain  
A quiet residence, this great reward  
He on Eurystheus promised to bestow,  
That he would rid the world of every pest :  
Harassed by Juno's stings, or envious fate,  
With her conspiring : but, his other labours  
Accomplished, he through Tænarus' jaws at length  
Went to the house of Pluto, to drag forth  
Into the realms of day hell's triple hound :  
He thence returns not. But an old tradition

Among the race of Cadmus hath prevailed,  
 That Lycus, Dirce's husband, erst bore rule  
 Over this city, till Jove's sons, Amphion  
 And Zethus, who on milk-white coursers rode,  
 Became its sovereigns. Lycus' son who bears  
 His father's name, no Theban, but arriving  
 From the Eubœan state, slew royal Creon,  
 And having slain him, seized the throne, invading  
 The city with tumultuous broils convulsed.  
 But the affinity which we have formed  
 With Creon, seems to be my greatest curse :  
 For while my son stays in the realms beneath,  
 Lycus th' egregious monarch of this land  
 Would with the children of Alcides kill  
 His consort, by fresh murders to extinguish  
 The past, and kill me too (if one through age  
 So useless may be numbered among men),  
 Lest when the boys attain maturer age,  
 They should avenge their grandsire Creon's death.  
 But I (for my son left me here to tend  
 His children, and direct the house, since he  
 Entered the subterraneous realms of night),  
 With their afflicted mother, lest the race  
 Of Hercules should bleed, for an asylum  
 Have chosen this altar of protecting Jove,  
 Which my illustrious son for a memorial  
 Of his victorious arms did here erect,  
 When he in battle had subdued the Minyans.  
 But we, though destitute of every comfort,  
 Of food, drink, clothing, though constrained to lie  
 On the bare pavement, here maintain our seat,  
 For every hospitable door is barred  
 Against us, and we have no other hope  
 Of being saved. Some of our friends I see  
 Are faithless, and the few who prove sincere,  
 Too weak to aid us. Such is the effect  
 Of adverse fortune o'er the race of men ;  
 May he to whom I bear the least attachment,  
 Never experience that unerring test  
 Of friendship.

*Megara.*

• Thou old man, who erst didst storm  
 The Taphian ramparts, when thou with renown

Didst lead the host of Thebes ; the secret will  
 Of Heaven, how little can frail mortals know !  
 For to me too of no avail have proved  
 The fortunes of my father, who elate  
 With wealth and regal power (whence at the  
 breasts

Of its possessors spears are hurled by those  
 Whose souls the lust of mad ambition fires),  
 And having children, gave me to thy son,  
 Joining a noble consort in the bonds  
 Of wedlock with Alcides, through whose death  
 These blessings are all fled. Now I, and thou,  
 Old man, are doomed to perish with the sons  
 Of Hercules, whom, as the bird extends  
 Her sheltering wings over her callow brood,  
 I guard. By turns they come and question me :  
 "O mother, whither is my father gone ?  
 What is he doing ? when will he return ?"  
 Though now too young sufficiently to feel  
 How great their loss, thus ask they for their sire.  
 I change the theme, and forge a soothing tale,  
 But am with wonder smitten when the doors  
 Creak on their massive hinges, and at once  
 They all start up, that at their father's knees  
 They may fall prostrate. But what hope hast thou  
 Of saving us, or what support, old man ?  
 For I to thee look up. We from the bounds  
 Of these domains unnoticed cannot 'scape ;  
 Mightier than us, a watchful guard is placed  
 At every avenue, and in our friends  
 No longer for protection can we trust.  
 Explain thyself, if thou hast any scheme,  
 By which thou from impending death canst save us ;  
 But let us strive to lengthen out the time,  
 Since we are feeble.

*Amphitryon.*

'Tis no easy task

In such a situation, O my daughter,  
 To form a sure and instantaneous judgment.

*Megara.* What is there wanting to complete thy woes,  
 Or why art thou so fond of life ?

*Amphitryon.*

That blessing

I still enjoy, still cherish pleasing hopes.

*Megara.* I also hope, old man : but it is folly  
To look for what we never can attain.

*Amphitryon.* We by delaying might avert our fate.

*Megara.* But I in this sad interval of time  
Feel piercing anguish.

*Amphitryon.* The auspicious gales  
Of fortune, O my daughter, yet may waft  
Both you and me out of our present troubles,  
If e'er my son your valiant lord return.  
But O be pacified yourself, and cause  
Your children to dry up their streaming tears ;  
With gentle language and delusive tales  
Beguile them, though all fraudulent arts are wretched.  
For the disasters which afflict mankind  
Are wearied out ; the stormy winds retain not  
Their undiminished force ; nor are the blest  
Perpetually blest : for all things change,  
And widely differ from their former state.  
The valiant man is he who still holds fast  
His hopes ; but to despair bespeaks the coward.

CHORUS, AMPHITRYON, MEGARA.

*Chorus.* Propped on my faithful staff, from home.  
And from the couch of palsied age,  
In melancholy guise I roam,  
Constrained to chaunt funereal strains,  
As the expiring swan complains,  
A war of words alone I wage,  
In semblance, but a flitting sprite.  
An airy vision of the night.  
I totter ; yet doth active zeal  
This faithful bosom still inspire.  
Ye children who have lost your sire,  
Thou veteran, and thou aged dame,  
Doomed for thy lord these griefs to feel,  
Whose Pluto's dreary mansions claim ;  
O weary not your tender feet.  
Like steeds by galling harness bound,  
To turn the ponderous mill around,  
I would advance my friends to meet,  
Yet are my utmost efforts vain,  
This shattered frame I scarce sustain :

Draw near, O take this trembling hand,  
And holding fast my robe, support  
My steps, thy needful aid I court,  
Because I am too weak to stand.  
Lead on the chief, though now by years  
Bowed down, who marshalled on the strand,  
His comrades erst a hardy band ;  
With him in youth we launched our spears,  
Nor then belied our native land.  
See how their eyes dart liquid fire,  
Those children emulate their sire ;  
But still hereditary fate,  
Pursues with unrelenting hate  
Their tender years, nor can their charms  
Redeem them from impending harms.  
What valiant champions of thy cause,  
O Greece, thy violated laws,  
When these thy great supports shall fail,  
Torn from thy fostering land wilt thou bewail.  
But I behold the monarch of the realm,  
Tyrannic Lycus, who these doors approaches.

LYCUS, AMPHITRYON, MEGARA, CHORUS.

*Lycus.* This question (if I may) I to the sire  
And consort of Alcides would propose  
(But, as your king, I have a right to make  
Any inquiries I think fit) : How long  
Seek ye to spin out life ? What farther hope  
Have ye in view, what succour to ward off  
The stroke of death ? Expect ye that the father  
Of these deserted children, who lies stretched  
Amid the realms beneath will thence return,  
That ye bely your rank, and meanly utter  
These clamorous plaints on being doomed to die ?  
Through Greece hast *thou* diffused an idle boast,  
That Jove enjoyed thy consort, and begot  
An offspring like himself ; while *you* exulted  
In being called wife to the first of heroes.  
But what great action hath your lord performed,  
In having slain that hydra at the lake,  
Or the Nemæan lion whom with snares  
He caught, and then did arrogantly boast

That he had strangled in his nervous arms?  
Will these exploits enable you to vie  
With me? and for such merit am I bound  
To spare the sons of Hercules, who gained  
A name which he deserved not? He was brave  
In waging war with beasts, in nought beside,  
With his left hand he never did sustain  
The shield, nor faced he the protended spear,  
But with his bow, that weapon of a dastard,  
Was still prepared for flight: such arms afford  
No proof of courage; but the truly brave  
Is he who in the ranks where he is stationed  
Maintains his ground, and sees with steadfast eye  
Those ghastly wounds the missile javelin gives.  
Old man, I act not thus through cruelty,  
But caution; for I know that I have slain  
Creon *her* father, and possess his throne.  
These children therefore will not I allow  
To live till they attain maturer years,  
Lest they should punish me for such a deed.

*Amphitryon.* Jove will assert the cause of his own son  
But as for me, O Hercules, my care  
Shall be to prove the folly of this tyrant:  
For thy illustrious name I will not suffer  
To be reproached. First from a hateful charge  
(And that of cowardice I deem most hateful),  
Calling the gods to witness, am I bound  
To vindicate thy honour. I appeal  
To Jove's own thunder, and th' impetuous steeds,  
Which drew Alcides' chariot when he sped  
Those winged arrows to transpierce the flanks  
Of earth-born giants, and among the gods  
Triumphant revelled at the genial board.  
Go next to Pholoe's realm, thou worst of kings,  
And ask the Centaurs' monstrous brood, what man  
They judge to be most brave, whether that title  
Belongs not to my son, who only bears,  
As you assert, the semblance of a hero?  
But should you question the Eubœan mount  
Of Dirphys, where your infancy was nurtured,  
It cannot sound your praise: you have performed  
No glorious action for your native land.



To testify, yet scorn that wise invention  
The quiver fraught with shafts : attend to me  
And I will teach you wisdom. By his arms  
Encumbered, stands the warrior who is sheathed  
In ponderous mail, and through the fears of those  
Who fight in the same rank, if they want courage,  
Loses his life ; nor, if his spear be broken,  
Furnished with nought but courage, from his breast  
Can he repel the wound ; but he who bends  
With skilful hand the bow, hath this advantage,  
Which never fails him : with a thousand shafts  
He smites the foe, no danger to himself  
Incurring, but securely stands aloof,  
And wreaks his vengeance while they gaze around,  
Without perceiving whence the weapon comes :  
His person he exposes not, but takes  
A guarded post : for what in war displays  
The greatest prudence, is to vex the foe,  
Nor rush at random on their pointed spears.  
Such reasoning on the subject in debate  
With yours indeed agrees not : but what cause  
Have you for wishing to destroy these children ?  
How have they injured you ? In one respect  
I deem you wise, because you dread the race  
Of valiant men, and feel yourself a coward :  
Yet is it hard on us, if we must bleed  
Your apprehensions to remove ; you ought  
To suffer all we would inflict, from us  
Whose merit is superior far to yours,  
Were Jove impartial. Would you therefore wield  
The sceptre of this land, let us depart  
As exiles from the realm, or you shall meet  
With strict retaliation, when the gales  
Of wavering fortune alter. O thou land  
Of Cadmus (for to thee I now will speak,  
But in reproachful accents), such protection  
Afford'st thou to the sons of Hercules,  
Who singly warring with the numerous host  
Of Minyæ, caused the Thebans to lift up  
Their free-born eyes undaunted ? I on Greece  
No praises can bestow, nor will pass over  
In silence its base treatment of my son,

For 'twas its duty in these children's cause,  
Bearing flames, pointed spears, and glittering mail,  
To have marched forth, and recompensed the toils  
Of their great father, who had purged the sea  
And land from all its monsters. Such protection  
Nor doth the Theban city, O my children,  
Nor Greece afford you ; but ye now look up  
To me a feeble friend who can do nought,  
But plead for you with unavailing words.  
For all the vigour which I once possessed  
Hath now deserted me ; old age assails  
My trembling limbs and this decrepit frame.  
Were I again endued with youthful strength,  
I would snatch up my javelin, and defile  
With gore the yellow ringlets on the head  
Of that oppressor, whom his fear should drive  
Beyond the most remote Atlantic bounds.

*Chorus.* Are there not causes such as may provoke  
Those who are virtuous to express their thoughts,  
Though destitute of eloquence ?

*Lycus.* 'Gainst me  
Speak what thou wilt, for thou art armed with words,  
But for injurious language by my deeds  
Will I requite thee. Go, send woodmen, some  
To Helicon, some to Parnassus' vale,  
Bid them fell knotted oaks, and having borne them  
Into the city, heap their ponderous trunks  
Around the altar, and with kindled flames  
Consume the bodies of this hated race ;  
So shall they learn that Creon the deceased  
No longer is the ruler of this land,  
But that I wield the sceptre. As for you  
Who thwart my counsels, O ye aged men,  
Not for the sons of Hercules alone  
Shall ye lament, but for those evil fortunes  
Which he and your own house are doomed to suffer :  
But this shall ye remember, that to me,  
Your monarch, ye are slaves.

*Chorus.* O ye the race  
Of earth, whom Mars erst sowed, when he had torn  
From the huge dragon's jaws th' envenomed teeth,  
With those right hands why will ye not uplift

The staves on which ye lean, and with his gore  
 Defile the head of this unrighteous man,  
 Not born at Thebes, but in a foreign realm,  
 From inconsiderate youths who gains that homage  
 Which he deserves not ? but in evil hour  
 O'er me shalt thou bear rule, nor shall my wealth  
 Acquired by many toils be ever thine :  
 Go, act the tyrant in Eubœa's land,  
 From whence thou hither cam'st : for while I live,  
 The sons of Hercules thou ne'er shall slay,  
 Nor is their mighty father plunged so deep  
 Beneath earth's surface, that he cannot hear  
 His children's outcries. Thou to whom this land  
 Owes its destruction dost possess the throne :  
 But he its benefactor is deprived  
 Of the rewards he merits. Me thou deem'st  
 Officious, for protecting those I love  
 E'en in the grave, where friends are needed most.  
 O my right arm, how dost thou wish to wield  
 The spear, but through enfeebling age hast lost  
 Thy vigour : else would I have quelled thy pride  
 Who dar'st to call me slave, and in this Thebes,  
 Where thou exult'st, with glory dwelt. A city  
 Diseased through mutiny and evil counsels  
 Is void of wisdom, or would ne'er have chosen  
 Thee for its lord.

*Megara.*

Ye veterans, I applaud  
 Your zeal ; for indignation at the wrongs  
 His friends endure becomes the virtuous friend.  
 But let not anger 'gainst your lord expose you  
 To suffer in our cause. My judgment hear,  
 Amphitryon, if to thee in aught I seem  
 To speak discreetly. I these children love  
 (And how can I help loving those I bore ?)  
 For whom I have endured the painful throes  
 Of childbirth. And to die is what I think of  
 As of a thing most dreadful ; but the man  
 Who with necessity contends I hold  
 An idiot. But let us, since die we must,  
 Not perish in the flames to furnish scope  
 Of laughter to our foes, which I esteem  
 An ill beyond e'en death : for much is due

To the unsullied honour of our house,  
For thee who erst in arms hast gained renown,  
To die with cowardice, were a reproach  
Not to be borne. My lord, though I forbear  
To dwell on his just praises, is so noble,  
He would not wish these children saved, to bear  
The imputation of an evil name :  
For through the conduct of degenerate sons  
Reproach oft falls on their illustrious sires ;  
And the examples which my husband gave me,  
I ought not to reject. But view what grounds  
Thou hast for hope, that I of these may form  
A proper estimate. Dost thou expect  
Thy son to issue from the realms beneath ?  
What chief deceased from Pluto's loathed abode  
Did e'er return ? Can we by gentle words  
Appease this tyrant ? No : we ought to fly  
From fools who are our foes : but to the wise  
And generous yield ; for we with greater ease  
May make a friend of him in whom we find  
A sense of virtuous shame. But to my soul  
This thought occurs, that we, the children's sentence,  
By our entreaties, haply might obtain  
Converted into exile : yet this too  
Is wretched, at th' expense of piteous need  
To compass our deliverance. For their friends  
Avoid the face of guests like these, and look  
No longer kindly on the banished man  
After one day is over. Rouse thy courage,  
And bleed with us, thee too, since death awaits.  
By thy great soul, O veteran, I conjure thee.  
Although the man who labours to repel  
Evils inflicted by Heaven's wrath, is brave,  
Yet doth such courage border upon frenzy :  
For what the fates ordain, no god can frustrate.

*Chorus.* While yet these arms retained their youthful strength,  
Had any one insulted thee, with ease  
Could I have quelled him ; but I now am nothing :  
On thee, Amphitryon, therefore 'tis incumbent  
To think how best thou may'st henceforth ward off  
Th' assaults of fortune. •

*Amphitryon.*

No unmanly fear,

No wish to lengthen out this life, prevents  
 My voluntary death : but I would save  
 The children of my son, though I appear  
 To grasp at things impossible. Behold  
 I bare my bosom to the sword ; pierce, slay,  
 Or cast me from the rock. But I, O king,  
 For this one favour sue to you ; despatch  
 Me and this hapless dame before the children,  
 Lest them we view, most execrable sight,  
 In death's convulsive pangs, to her who bore them,  
 And me their grandsire, shrieking out for aid.  
 But as for all beside, do what you list,  
 For we have now no bulwark which from death  
 Can save us.

*Megara.* I entreat one favour more,  
 Which to us both will equally be grateful.  
 Permit me in funeral robes to dress  
 My children ; for that purpose be the gates  
 Thrown open (for the palace now is closed  
 Against us) that they from their father's house  
 This small advantage may obtain.

*Lycus.* Your wishes  
 Shall be complied with. I my servants bid  
 Unbar the gates. Go in, bedeck yourselves ;  
 The costly robes I grudge not ; but no sooner  
 Shall ye have put them on, than I to you  
 Will come, and plunge you in the shades beneath.

[*Exit* LYCUS.]

*Megara.* Follow your hapless mother, O my children,  
 To your paternal house, where, though our wealth  
 Be in the hands of others, our great name  
 We still preserve.

*Amphitryon.* O Jove, 'twas then in vain  
 That thou didst deign to share my nuptial couch,  
 In vain too, of thy son have I been styled  
 The father, for thou hast not proved the friend  
 Thou didst appear to be. I, though a man,  
 Exceed in virtue thee a mighty god ;  
 Because I to their foes have not betrayed  
 The sons of Hercules : but thou, by stealth,  
 Entering my chamber, to another's wife  
 Without permission cam'st ; yet know'st not how

To save thy friends ; thou surely art a god  
Either devoid of wisdom, or unjust.

[*Exeunt AMPHITRYON and MEGARA.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

For Linus' death, by all the tuneful Nine  
    Bewailed, doth Phoebus' self complain,  
And loudly uttering his auspicious strain,  
Smite with a golden quill the lyre ; but mine  
    Shall be the task, while songs of praise  
    I chaunt and twine the laureate wreath,  
    His matchless fortitude t' emblaze,  
Who sought hell's inmost gloom, the dreary shades  
    beneath ;  
Whether I call the hero son of Jove,  
    Or of Amphitryon ; for the fame  
To which his labours have so just a claim,  
Must e'en in death attract the public love :  
In the Nemæan forest first he slew  
    That lion huge, whose tawny hide  
    And grinning jaws extended wide,  
    He o'er his shoulders threw.

I. 2.

• The winged arrows whizzing from his bow,  
    Did on their native hills confound  
The Centaurs' race with many a deadly wound :  
Alcides' matchless strength doth Peneus know  
    Distinguished by his limpid waves,  
    The fields laid waste of wide extent,  
    With Pelion, and the neighbouring caves  
Of Homoles, uprooting from whose steep ascent,  
Tall pines that cast a venerable shade,  
The monsters armed their forceful hands,  
And strode terrific o'er Thessalia's lands :  
Then breathless on th' ensanguined plain he laid  
That hind distinguished by her golden horns,  
    And still in Dian's temple seen  
    His prize, to glad the huntress queen,  
    Oenœ's walls adorns.

## II. 1.

The chariot with triumphal ensigns graced  
 Ascending, to his stronger yoke  
 He Diomedes' furious coursers broke,  
 Scorning the bit, in hateful stalls who placed  
 By their fell lord, the flesh of man  
 Raging devoured, accursed food ;  
 A stream from their foul mangers ran,  
 Filled with unholy gore, and many a gobbet crude.  
 O'er Hebrus' silver tide at the command  
 Of Argos' unrelenting king  
 Eurystheus, he these captive steeds did bring,  
 Close to Anauros' mouth on Pelion's strand.  
 Inhuman Cynus, son of Mars, next felt  
 The force of his resounding bow,  
 Unsocial wretch, the stranger's foe,  
 Who in Amphanea dwelt.

## II. 2.

Then came he to th' harmonious nymphs, that band  
 Who in Hesperian gardens hold  
 Their station, where the vegetative gold  
 Glows in the fruitage ; with resistless hand  
 To snatch the apple from its height ;  
 The dragon wreathed his folds around  
 The tree's huge trunk, portentous sight,  
 In vain ; that monster fell transfixed with many a  
 wound.  
 Into those straits of the unfathomed main  
 He entered, with auspicious gales,  
 Where feared the mariner t' unfurl his sails,  
 And fixing limits to the watery plain  
 His columns reared : then from the heavens' huge  
 load  
 The wearied Atlas he relieved,  
 His arm the starry realms upheaved,  
 And propped the gods' abode.

## III. 1.

Foe to the Amazons' equestrian race,  
 He crossed the boisterous Euxine tide,

And gave them battle by Mæotis' side.  
 What friends through Greece collected he to face  
     Hippolita, th' intrepid maid,  
     That he the belt of Mars might gain,  
     And tissued robe with golden braid.  
 Still doth exulting Greece the virgin's spoils retain,  
     Lodged in Mycene's shrine, with gore imbrued,  
     The dog of Lerna's marshy plain,  
 Who unresisting multitudes had slain,  
 The hundred-headed hydra, he subdued,  
 Aided by fire, and winged shafts combined,  
     These from his well-stored quiver flew,  
     And triple-formed Geryon slew,  
     Fierce Erythræa's hind.

## III. 2.

But having finished each adventurous strife,  
     At length in evil hour he steers  
 To Pluto's mansion, to the house of tears,  
 The goal of labour, there to end his life,  
     Thence never, never to return ;  
     His friends dismayed forsake these gates,  
     In hopeless solitude we mourn.  
 Hell's stern award is passed, the boat of Charon waits  
     To their eternal home his sons to bear,  
     Most impious lawless homicide !  
 • For thee, O Hercules, thee erst his pride,  
 Thy sire now looks with impotent despair.  
 Had I the strength which I possessed of yore,  
     I with my Theban friends, arrayed  
     In brazen arms, thy sons would aid :  
     But youth's blest days are o'er.  
 Clad in funereal vestments I behold  
 The children of Alcides erst the great,  
 With his loved wife and his decrepit sire  
 Conducting them. O wretched me ! no longer  
 Can I restrain the fountain of these tears  
 Which gush incessant from my aged eyes.

MEGARA, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

*Megara.* Come on. What priest, what butcher is at hand  
 To slay these wretched children, or transpierce



My bosom? Now the victims stand prepared  
 For their descent to Pluto's loathed abode.  
 By force, my children, are we borne along  
 United in th' unseemly bands of death ;  
 Decrepit age with helpless infancy  
 And intermingled matrons. O dire fate  
 Of me and of my sons, whom these sad eyes  
 Shall never more behold ! Alas ! I bore,  
 I nurtured you, to be the scorn, the sport,  
 Of our inveterate foes, and by their hands  
 To perish. Each fond hope, which from the  
 words

Of your departed father erst I formed,  
 Hath proved fallacious. The deceased to *thee*  
 Allotted Argos, in Eurystheus' palace  
 Wert *thou* to dwell a mighty king, and wield  
 The sceptre of Pelasgia's fruitful land,  
 Then with the lion's hide himself had worn  
 Thy front he covered : *you* were to ascend  
 The throne of Thebes for brazen chariots famed,  
 Possessing my hereditary fields,  
 Such were the hopes of your exulting sire,  
 Who to *your* hand consigned that ponderous mace  
 Deceitful gift of Dædalus : on *thee*,  
 Thou little one, he promised to bestow  
 Oecalia, which his shafts had erst laid waste :  
 To you all three, these realms in threefold portions  
 Did he distribute ; for your father's views  
 Were all magnanimous : but I marked out  
 Selected consorts for you, and formed schemes  
 Of new affinities, from the domains  
 Of Athens, Sparta, and the Theban city ;  
 That binding up your cables, and secure  
 From the tempestuous deep, ye might enjoy  
 A happy life : these prospects now are vanished :  
 For to your arms hath changeful Fortune given  
 The Destinies to be your brides, while tears  
 Are your unhappy mother's lustral drops.  
 Your grandsire celebrates the nuptial feast,  
 O'er which he summons Pluto to preside,  
 The father of your consorts. But, alas !  
 Whom first of you my children, or whom last

To this fond bosom shall I clasp, on whom  
 Bestow a kiss, whom in my arms sustain?  
 How like the bee with variegated wings  
 Shall I collect the sorrows of you all,  
 And blend the whole together in a flood  
 Of tears exhaustless? O my dearest lord,  
 If any of those spirits who reside  
 In Pluto's realms beneath, can hear the voice  
 Of mortals, in these words to thee I speak:  
 O Hercules, thy father and thy sons  
 Are doomed to bleed; I perish too who erst  
 On thy account was by the world called happy.  
 Protect us, come, and to these eyes appear,  
 Though but a ghost; thy presence will suffice:  
 For these thy children's murderers, when with  
 thee  
 Compared, are dastards.

*Amphitryon.*

To appease the powers  
 Of hell beneath, O woman, be thy care.  
 But lifting to the skies my suppliant hands,  
 I call on thee, O Jove, that, if thou mean  
 To be a friend to these deserted children,  
 Thou interpose without delay and save them,  
 For soon 'twill be no longer in thy power:  
 Thou oft hast been invoked; but all my prayers  
 Are ineffectual; die, it seems, we must.  
 But, O ye aged men, the bliss which life  
 Can yield is small, contrive then how to pass  
 As sweetly as is possible the hours  
 Which fate allots you, e'en from morn till night  
 Shaking off every grief: for Time preserves not  
 Our hopes entire, but on his own pursuits  
 Intent, deserts us, borne on rapid wings.  
 Look but on me, amid the sons of men  
 Conspicuous erst performing glorious deeds;  
 And yet hath Fortune in one single day  
 Taken all from me, like a feather wafted  
 Into the trackless air. I know not him  
 To whom collected stores of wealth or fame  
 Are durable. Farewell, for this, my comrades,  
 Is the last time ye shall behold your friend.

HERCULES, MEGARA, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

*Megara.* Ha ! O thou aged man, do I behold  
My dearest husband ? How shall I find utterance ?

*Amphitryon.* I know not, O my daughter ; for I too  
Am with amazement seized.

*Megara.* This sure is he  
Who as we heard was in the realms beneath ;  
Else doth some vision in the noontide glare  
Delude our senses. But what frantic words  
Were those I spoke as if 'twas all a dream ?  
This is no other than thy real son,  
Thou aged man. Come hither, O my children,  
Cling to your father's robe, with speed advance,  
Quit not your hold, for ye in him shall find  
An equal to our great protector Jove.

*Hercules.* All hail, thou mansion, and thou vestibule  
Of my abode ; thee with what joy once more  
Do I behold, revisiting the light.  
Ha ! what hath happened ? I my children see  
With garlands on their temples, and my wife  
Amidst a throng of men, my father too  
Weeping for some mischance. I'll go to them,  
And ask the cause. What recent ill, O woman,  
Hath happened to this house ?

*Megara.* My dearest lord,  
O thou who to thy aged father com'st  
A radiant light, in safety hast thou reached,  
At this important crisis, the abodes  
Of those thou lov'st.

*Hercules.* What mean you by these words ?  
What tumults, O my sire, are we involved in ?

*Megara.* We are undone ; but O thou aged man,  
Forgive, if I've anticipated that  
Thou would'st have said to him : for in some points  
Our sex are greater objects of compassion  
Than males. I deem my children dead ; I too  
Am perishing.

*Hercules.* O Phœbus ! with what preludes  
Do you begin your speech ?

*Megara.* " My valiant brothers,  
And aged sire, alas ! are now no more.

*Hercules.* Who slew them, how, or with what weapon?

*Megara.* *Lycus,*

The monarch of this city, was their murderer.

*Hercules.* With arms did he oppose them, or prevail,

When foul sedition through the land diffused

Its pestilent contagion?

*Megara.* By revolt

He holds the sceptre of the Theban realm.

*Hercules.* But wherefore hath this sudden panic reached

You and my aged sire?

*Megara.* He would have slain

Thy father, me, and these defenceless children.

*Hercules.* What mean you? could he fear my orphan race?

*Megara.* Lest they hereafter might avenge the death

Of Creon.

*Hercules.* But what garb is this they wear,

Which suits some corse?

*Megara.* Already in these vestments

For our funereal rites are we arrayed.

*Hercules.* And were ye on the point of perishing

By violence? Ah me!

*Megara.* Our friends desert us;

For we have heard that thou wert dead.

*Hercules.* Whence rose

This comfortless depression of the soul?

*Megara.* Eurystheus' heralds the sad tidings bore.

*Hercules.* But for what cause did ye forsake my house,

My sacred Lares?

*Megara.* From his bed thy sire

Was forcibly dragged forth.

*Hercules.* So void of shame

Was Lycus as to treat his age with scorn?

*Megara.* Shame dwells not near the shrine of brutal force.

*Hercules.* Were we thus destitute of friends when absent?

*Megara.* What friends abide with him who is unhappy?

*Hercules.* But did they scorn the battles which I fought

Against the Minyans?

*Megara.* I to thee repeat it,

Calamity is friendless and forlorn.

*Hercules.* Will ye not cast from your dishevelled hair

These wreaths of Pluto? will ye not look up

To yon bright sun, and ope your eyes to view

Scenes far more pleasing than the loathsome shades  
 Of hell beneath? But I, for wrongs like these  
 Demand my vengeful arm, with speed will go  
 And overturn the house of that new king,  
 His impious head I to the ravenous hounds  
 Lopped from his trunk will cast, and each base  
 Theban

Who with ingratitude repays my kindness  
 With this victorious weapon smite : my shafts  
 The rest shall scatter, till Ismenos' channel  
 Be choked up with the corpses of the slain,  
 And Dirce's limpid fountain stream with gore.  
 For whom, in preference to my wife, my children,  
 And aged father, shall I aid? Farewell,  
 Ye labours which unwittingly I strove  
 T' accomplish, mindless of these dearest pledges ;  
 In their defence I equally am bound  
 To yield up life, if for their father they  
 Were doomed to bleed. What! shall we call it  
 noble

To war against the hydra or the lion,  
 And execute the mandates of Eurystheus,  
 If I avert not my own children's death?  
 No longer else shall I, as erst, be styled  
 Alcides the victorious.

*Chorus.*

It is just

Parents should aid their sons, their aged sire,  
 And the dear partner of the nuptial bed.

*Amphitryon.* My son, this mighty privilege is yours,  
 To be the best of friends to those you love,  
 And a determined foe to those you hate.  
 But be not too impetuous.

*Hercules.*

In what instance

Have I been hastier, O my honoured sire,  
 Than it becomes me?

*Amphitryon.*

To support his cause,

The king hath many, who in fact are poor,  
 Though fame accounts them rich; they raised a  
 tumult,

And caused the ruin of the state, to plunder  
 Their neighbours; for the fortunes they possessed  
 Are through their own extravagance and sloth



*Amphitryon.* But wherefore in the realms beneath, so long  
Did you remain?

*Hercules.* I there prolonged my stay,  
My sire, to bring back Theseus from the shades.

*Amphitryon.* And where is he, gone to his native land?

*Hercules.* He went to Athens, pleased with his escape  
From the infernal regions. But attend  
Your father to the palace, O my sons,  
Which now ye enter in a happier state  
Than when ye left it: but take courage, cease  
To pour forth floods of tears; and, O my wife,  
Collect thyself, let all thy terrors cease,  
And loose my garments; for I have not wings,  
Nor would I vanish from my friends. Alas!  
Their hold they quit not, but cling faster still,  
And faster to my vest. Because ye stand  
Upon the verge of ruin, I will take  
And bear you hence, as by the ship light boats  
Are guided o'er the deep: for I refuse not  
The care my children claim. Here all mankind  
Are on a level, they of nobler rank  
And mean condition, to their progeny  
Bear equal love. The gifts of fortune vary,  
Some have abundant wealth, and some are poor;  
But the whole human race feels this attachment.  
[*Exeunt HERCULES and MEGARA, with the children.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Youth is light, and free from care  
But now a burden on my head  
Heavier than Ætna's rock, old age, I bear,  
Before these eyes its sable veil is spread.  
Not for the wealth of Asiatic kings,  
Or heaps of gold that touched yon roof sublime,  
Ere would I barter life's enchanting prime;  
Hence wealth a brighter radiance flings,  
And poverty itself can charm: •  
But thou, curst dotage, art the sum

Of every fancied, every real harm ;  
May'st thou be plunged beneath the deep, nor come  
To peopled town, or civilized abode,  
Go wing thy distant flight along th' aerial road.

## I. 2.

Did the gods with sapient care  
Meted out their bounty to mankind,  
The good, the gift of twofold youth should share  
Unquestioned token of a virtuous mind,  
Behold life's son its blest career renew,  
While the degenerate sleep to wake no more.  
We by these means distinctly might explore  
Their merits with as clear a view,  
As sailors, who each starry spark  
Enumerate that adorns the skies.  
But now the gods have by no certain mark  
Directed whom we for their worth should prize,  
Whom shun as wicked : uninformed we live,  
Revolving time hath nought but plenteous wealth to give.

## II. 1.

Mindful of its ancient themes,  
This faltering tongue shall ne'er refuse,  
Oft as I wander by their haunted streams,  
To blend each gentle grace and tuneful muse :  
O may I dwell among the harmonious choirs,  
My brows still circled with a laureate wreath !  
Still shall the bard, a hoary veteran, breathe  
The strains Mnemosuné inspires :  
While memory wakes, I ne'er will cease  
Th' exploits of Hercules to sing ;  
Where Bromius yields the purple vine's increase,  
Where Libyan pipes and the lute's sevenfold string  
Are heard in dulcet unison ; to praise  
The Nine who aid the dance, I'll wake my choral lays.

## II. 2.

Delian virgins at the gate  
Assembled, festive pæans sing,  
The triumphs of Latona's son relate,  
And nimbly vaulting form their beauteous ring.



Into thy temple, by devotion led,  
 O Phœbus, will I raise my parting breath ;  
 The swan thus warbles at the hour of death :  
 Though hoary hairs my cheeks o'erspread.  
 How great the hero's generous love,  
 Whose merits aid our votive song,  
 Alcides the resistless son of Jove ;  
 Those trophies, which to noble birth belong  
 By him are all surpassed, his forceful hand  
 Restoring peace, hath cleansed this monster-teeming  
 land.

LYCUS, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

*Lycus.* Forth from the portals at due season comes  
 Amphitryon ; for 'tis long since ye were decked  
 In robes and trappings such as suit the dead.  
 But go, command the children and the wife  
 Of Hercules without these gates t' appear,  
 Because ye have engaged that ye will die  
 By your own hands.

*Amphitryon.* You persecute, O king,  
 Me whom already fortune hath made wretched,  
 And with sharp taunts insult my dying race :  
 Although in power supreme, you ought to act  
 With moderation ; but since you impose  
 This harsh necessity, we must submit,  
 And execute your will.

*Lycus.* Where's Megara ?  
 Where are the children of Alcmena's son ?

*Amphitryon.* To me she seems, as far as I can guess,  
 From looking through the door—

*Lycus.* What grounds hast thou  
 For this opinion ?

*Amphitryon.* In a suppliant posture  
 To sit before the Lares.

*Lycus.* And implore them  
 With unavailing plaints to save her life.

*Amphitryon.* In vain too calls she on her lord deceased.

*Lycus.* But he is absent, he can ne'er return.

*Amphitryon.* Unless some god should raise him up again.

*Lycus.* Go thou, and from the palace lead her hither.

*Amphitryon.* 'Twould make me an accomplice in the murder,  
If thus I acted.

*Lycus.* Since thy soul recoils,  
I, whom such idle scruples cannot move,  
Will with their mother bring the children forth.  
Follow my steps, my servants, that at length  
We may behold sweet peace succeed our toils.

[*Exit* LYCUS.]

*Amphitryon.* Depart : for to that place the Fates ordain  
You now are on the road ; perhaps the sequel  
Will be another's province : but expect,  
Since you have done amiss, to suffer vengeance.  
He, O ye veterans, at a lucky hour  
Enters the palace, for on ambushed swords  
His feet will stumble, while the villain hopes  
Those he would murder are too near at hand  
To 'scape : but I will go to see him fall  
A breathless corse : for when our foe endures  
The just requital of his impious deeds,  
There is a joy resulting from his death.

[*Exit* AMPHITRYON.]

*Chorus.* Changed are our evil fortunes. To the shades  
He who was erst a mighty king descends.  
O justice, and ye dread vicissitudes  
Of fate, ordained by Heaven !

*1st Semichor.* Thou art at length  
Gone thither, where by death thou for those taunts,  
With which those o'er the virtuous didst exult,  
Shalt make atonement.

*2nd Semichor.* My delight bursts forth  
In floods of tears : for now is come that day  
The tyrant deemed would never visit him.

*1st Semichor.* But let us also look into the palace,  
My aged friend, and mark if yonder miscreant  
Be punished as I wish.

*Lycus* [*within*]. Ah me ! ah me !

*Chorus.* That melody most grateful to mine ear  
Beneath yon roofs commences ; nor is death  
Far distant ; for these cries the monarch utters  
Are but a prelude to the fatal stroke.

*Lycus* [*within*]. Ye realms of Cadmus, I through treachery  
perish !

*2nd Semichor.* Others have perished by that bloody hand.  
 Since then the retribution thou endur'st  
 Is just, endure it bravely.

*1st Semichor.* Where is he  
 Who uttered 'gainst the blest immortal powers  
 His foolish blasphemies, and called the gods  
 Too weak to punish him?

*2nd Semichor.* That impious man  
 Is now no more. Yon vaulted roofs are silent,  
 Let us begin the harmonious choral lay;  
 For, as I wished, our comrades prove victorious.

## CHORUS.

## ODE.

## I. I.

The sumptuous banquet, with th' enlivening dance  
 Now every Theban shall employ;  
 Dried are our tears, and past mischance  
 Yields to the lyre abundant themes of joy:  
 Stretched low in dust the tyrant lies;  
 But he, who by an ancient right  
 Obtains the sceptre, is our king;  
 From Acheron's loathed stream behold him rise,  
 Revisiting the cheerful realms of light,  
 And hope, unlooked for, doth fresh transports bring

## I. 2.

The gods take cognizance of broken trust,  
 Nor are they deaf to holy prayer.  
 On gold and fortune, power unjust  
 Attends; man's reason is too weak to bear  
 The joint temptations. Heaven at length,  
 Whose kind protection we invoke,  
 Deigning with pity to behold  
 Our woes, to the neglected laws their strength  
 Restoring, with vindictive fury broke  
 The sable car which bore the god of gold.

## II. I.

Now let the flowery wreath, the victor's pride,  
 Adorn Ismenos; let each street employ  
 The hours in dance and social joy;

Let Dirce from the silver wave arise,  
 And old Asopus' daughters by her side,  
     Forsaking their paternal stream,  
     Conspire to aid our rapturous theme,  
 And for Alcides claim the victor's prize.  
 Ye Pythian rocks, with waving forests crowned,  
 And seats of Helicon's melodious choir,  
     Come every nymph, with cheerful sound,  
 Visit these walls which to the clouds aspire ;  
 In helmed crop here warriors filled the plains.  
 Whose lineage undecayed from age to age remains.

## II. 2.

O ye, the partners of one nuptial bed,  
 Happy Amphitryon, sprung from mortal race,  
     And Jove, who rushed to the embrace  
 Of bright Alcmena ; for of thee aright,  
 Though erst, O Jove, I doubted, was it said  
     Thou didst enjoy that beauteous dame ;  
     With the renown his triumphs claim,  
 Time through the world displays Alcides' might,  
 Emerged from grisly Pluto's realms abhorred,  
 Who quits the darksome caverns of the earth,  
     To me a far more welcome lord,  
 Than yon vile tyrant of ignoble birth.  
 Now to the bloody strife we lift our eyes ;  
 The vengeful sword is bared, if Justice haunt the skies.  
*Semichor.* Ha ! are we all by the same panic seized ?  
     My aged friends, what spectre, hovering o'er  
     The palace, do I see ? Those tardy feet  
     Raise from the ground, precipitate thy flight,  
     Begone.—From me, O Pæan, mighty king,  
     Avert these evils.

## IRIS, A FIEND, CHORUS.

*Iris.* O, ye aged men,  
 Be not dismayed : the fiend whom ye behold  
 Is daughter of old Night, and I am Iris,  
 The god's ambassadress. \* We are not come  
 To harm your city ; for we only war  
 Against one man, who, sprung 'tis said from Jove.

And from Alcmena : till he had performed  
 Severest labours, fate preserved his life ;  
 Nor did his father Jove permit, or me,  
 Or Juno, e'er to hurt him : but, each toil  
 Eurystheus' hate enjoined, now he hath finished,  
 Those oft-polluted hands with recent gore  
 Will Juno stain, by urging him to slay  
 His children : in this scheme I too conspire.  
 Come on then, armed with a relentless heart,  
 Unwedded daughter of the pitchy Night ;  
 Instil into that hero's breast such frenzy  
 As shall o'erturn his reason, and constrain him  
 To perpetrate this murder ; his wild steps  
 Goad onward, throw the bloody cable forth,  
 That having sent this band of graceful sons,  
 Slain by their father's arm, adown the gulf  
 Of Acheron, th' effects of Juno's wrath  
 And mine, he may experience ; for the gods  
 Would be mere things of no account, but great  
 Would be the power of man, if he escaped  
 Unpunished.

*Fiend.* I from noble parents spring,  
 Night is my mother ; and that blood which streamed  
 From the foul wound of Ouranus, my sire :  
 To me belongs this praise, I 'gainst my friend  
 No envious rancour feel, nor with delight  
 Invade them ; but this counsel would suggest  
 To you and Juno, ere I see you rush  
 Into a fatal error, if my words  
 Can move you: he into whose house you send  
 me  
 Is not obscure, or in the realms beneath,  
 Or yet among the gods : for when o'er lands,  
 Impervious erst, and o'er the stormy waves,  
 He had established peace, he to the gods  
 Their ancient honours, which by impious men  
 Had been abolished, singly did restore.  
 I therefore would dissuade you from contriving  
 'Gainst him these mischiefs.

*Iris.* Blame not thou the schemes  
 Devised by Juno and by me.

*Fier.d.* Your steps

Into a better path, from that which leads  
To evil, would I turn.

*Iris.*

## The wife of Jove

Sent thee not hither to act thus discreetly.

*Fiend.* Witness, thou sun, reluctant I obey.

But if constrained to be the instrument  
Of Juno's wrath and yours, I with such speed  
As when the hounds obey the huntsman's voice,  
Your signal will attend ; nor shall the deep  
Upheaving with a groan its troubled waves,  
The earthquake, or the thunderbolt, whose blast  
Is winged with fate, outstrip me, when I rush  
Into the breast of Hercules : the gates  
Will I burst open, and assail the house,  
First causing his devoted sons to bleed ;  
Nor shall their murderer know that his own hand  
Slew those whom he begot, till he is rescued  
From the distraction I inspire. Behold  
He at the barrier stands, and shakes his head,  
And rolls in silence his distorted eyes,  
Flaming with anger. To contain his breath  
No longer able, like a bull, prepared  
To make the terrible assault, he bellows,  
And calls the Furies from the dire abyss  
Of Tartarus. Thee I to a greater height  
Of frenzy soon will rouse, and through thy soul  
Cause my terrific clarion to resound.  
O noble Iris, to Olympus' height  
Now wing your swift career, while I, unseen,  
Will enter the abodes of Hercules.

[*Exeunt IRIS and the FIEND.*]

*Chorus.* Thou city, groan ; thy choicest flower,  
The son of Jove, is cropped : O Greece,  
Thy benefactor's fatal hour  
Impends. To thee for ever lost,  
Assailed by that infernal pest,  
The dauntless chief, deprived of peace,  
Shall feel his agonizing breast  
With horrible distraction tossed.  
Hence in her brazen chariot went  
The raging-fiend, on mischief bent ;  
She urges with a scorpion goad

Her steeds along th' ethereal road.  
That hundred-headed child of Night.  
With all those hissing snakes around,  
From her envenomed eyeballs bright  
The Gorgon thus directs the wound.  
Soon changed by Heaven's supreme decree,  
Is man's short-lived felicity.  
Ye infants, soon shall ye expire,  
Slain by your own distracted sire.  
Ah me ! thy son, without delay,  
Shall be left childless, mighty Jove ;  
For on his tortured soul shall prey  
Yon fiend, and by the powers above  
Vengeance commissioned to destroy.  
O mansion erst the scene of joy !  
To form a prelude to this dance,  
Neither the cheering timbrel's sound,  
Nor sportive Menades advance ;  
Here human gore shall stream around,  
Instead of that refreshing juice,  
Which Bacchus' purple grapes produce.  
Away, ye children, danger's nigh,  
For he who wakes this hostile strain,  
Traces your footsteps as ye fly ;  
Nor will the fiend with fruitless rage,  
A war beneath those mansions wage.  
Alas ! we sink o'erwhelmed with woe,  
My tears shall never cease to flow.  
I wail the grandsire hoar with age,  
The mother too who bore that train  
Of lovely children, but in vain.  
Lo, what a tempest shakes the wall,  
And makes th' uprooted mansion fall !  
What mean'st thou, frantic son of Jove ?  
The hellish uproar thou dost raise,  
Filling the palace with amaze,  
Is such as vexed the realms above,  
Till issuing with victorious might,  
Pallas invincible in fight  
The huge Enceladus oppressed,  
And piled all Ætna on his breast.

## MESSENGER, CHORUS.

*Messenger.* O ye whose heads are whitened o'er with age!

*Chorus.* Why dost thou call me with so loud a voice?

*Messenger.* Atrocious are the mischiefs which have happened  
Within the palace.

*Chorus.* I need now call in

No other seer. The boys are slain. Ah me!

*Messenger.* Indulge your groans, for such events as these  
Demand them.

*Chorus.* By a foe, e'en by the hand  
Of their own sire, in whom that foe they found.

*Messenger.* No tongue can utter woes beyond what we  
Have suffered.

*Chorus.* What account hast thou to give  
Of the dire fate the father on his sons  
Inflicted? Sent by the avenging gods,  
Say why such mischiefs visited this house,  
And how the children miserably fell.

*Messenger.* To purify the house were victims brought  
Before Jove's altar, after Hercules  
Had slain and cast the monarch of this land  
Forth from these doors. Beside the victor stood  
His band of graceful children, with his sire  
And Megara. The sacred vase was borne  
Around the altar: from ill-omened words  
We all abstained. But while Alcmena's son  
In his right hand a kindled torch sustained,  
Ready to dip it in the lustral water,  
He made a silent stand; on this delay  
The children steadfastly observed their sire,  
But he no longer was the same; his eyes  
Were seized with strong convulsions, from their fibres  
Blood started forth, his bearded cheeks with foam  
Were covered: he midst bursts of laughter wild  
Cried: "Wherefore need I kindle, O my father,  
The fire for sacrifice, ere I have slain  
Eurystheus, in a double toil engaged,  
When I at once might better finish all?  
Soon as I hither bring Eurystheus' head,  
These hands which reek already with the gore  
Of Lycus, will I cleanse. Pour forth those waters."



Upon the ground, and cast your urns away.  
Who brings my bow, my club? I to Mycene  
Will go : let spades and levers be prepared,  
That I from their foundations may o'erturn  
Those walls which with the plummet and the line  
The Cyclops reared." Then eager to depart,  
Although he had no chariot, yet he talked  
As if he had one, fancying that he mounted  
The seat, and with his hand as with a thong  
Drove the ideal steeds. His servants laughed,  
And at the same time trembled ; till one cried  
(As on each other they with eager eyes  
Were gazing), "Doth my master sport with us,  
Or is he frantic?" Meanwhile through the palace  
Backward and forward he with hasty step  
Was walking : but no sooner did he reach  
That spacious hall, where at the genial board  
The men are wont t' assemble, than he said  
That he was come to Nisus' ancient city,  
And to th' imperial dome : and on the floor,  
As if reclining at the genial board,  
Bade us set forth the banquet. But the pause  
Which intervened was short, ere he exclaimed,  
That he was traversing the Isthmian rocks  
O'ergrown with woods ; then casting off his mantle  
He strove though there was no antagonist  
With whom to strive, proclaimed himself the victor,  
The name of that imaginary foe  
Announcing, over whom he had prevailed :  
But 'gainst Eurystheus he anon did utter  
Menaces the most horrible, and talk  
As if he at Mycene had been present.  
His father strove to hold his vigorous arm,  
And said to him : "What mean you, O my son?  
What wanderings into distant realms are these?  
Hath not the blood of him you have just slain  
Distracted you?" Then for Eurystheus' sire  
Mistaking his own father, as he strove  
To touch his hand, repelled the trembling suppliant :  
Against his sons, the quiver and the bow,  
Thinking to slay the children of Eurystheus,  
He next made ready ; they with terror smitten

Ran different ways ; the first beneath the robes  
Of his unhappy mother skulked ; a second  
Flew to the shade the lofty column formed :  
Under the altar quivering like a bird,  
The last concealed himself : their mother cried,  
“ What mean’st thou, O thou father, would’st thou  
slay  
Thy sons ? ” Amphytryon too, that aged man,  
And all the servants shrieked. But round the  
pillar  
The boy pursuing, he at length turned short,  
And meeting him, as foot to foot they stood,  
Transfixed his liver with a deadly shaft ;  
Supine he fell, and with his streaming gore  
Distained the sculptured pillars, at whose base  
He breathed his last. But, with a shout, Alcides  
Uttered these boasts : “ One of Eurystheus’ brood  
Slain by this arm, for the inveterate hate  
His father bore me, to atone, here lies  
A breathless corse.” Against another then,  
Who to the basis of the altar fled,  
And hoped to ’scape unseen, he bent his bow ;  
But ere he gave the wound, the wretched youth  
Fell at his father’s knees, stretched forth his hands  
To touch his chin, or twine around his neck,  
And cried : “ O spare my life, my dearest sire,  
Yours, I am yours indeed ; nor will you slay  
Eurystheus’ son.” But he with glaring eyes  
Looked like a Gorgon, while the boy pressed on  
So close, he had no scope to aim the shaft,  
But as the smith the glowing anvil smites,  
Full on his auburn tresses he discharged  
The ponderous mace, the crashing bones gave way.  
Scarce had he slain the second, when he ran  
To butcher his third son o’er both their corpses :  
But the unhappy mother in her arms  
Caught up, into an inner chamber bore  
The child, and closed the doors : but he, as if  
He had indeed been at the Cyclops’ city,  
With levers from their hinges forced them, pierced  
His wife and offspring with a single shaft,  
And then to slay his aged father rushed

With speed impetuous : but a spectre came,  
 Which to our eyes the awful semblance bore  
 Of Pallas brandishing her pointed spear,  
 And threw a rocky fragment at the breast  
 Of Hercules, which checked his murderous frenzy,  
 And plunged him into sleep. Upon the ground  
 Headlong he fell, where 'midst the ruins lay,  
 Rent from its pedestal a broken column :  
 But rallying from our flight, we, by his sire  
 Assisted, to the pillar bound him fast  
 With thongs, that on his wakening from this trance  
 He might commit no more atrocious deeds.  
 There doth he taste an inauspicious sleep,  
 First having slain his children and his consort.  
 I know no mortal more completely wretched.

[Exit MESSENGER.]

*Chorus.* There was a murder in the Argive land  
 Most wondrous and unparalleled through Greece  
 In days of yore, which the confederate daughters  
 Of Danaus perpetrated ; but their crimes  
 By the dire fate of Progne's only son  
 Were far surpassed. I of a bloody deed  
 Now speak which they committed, they whose  
     voice  
 Equals the Muses' choir ; but thou who spring'st  
 From Jove himself, hast in thy frenzy slain  
 All thy three sons ; for them what groans, what  
     tears,  
 What invocations to the shades beneath,  
 Or songs shall I prepare to soothe the rage  
 Of grisly Pluto ? Shivered on the ground  
 The portals of that lofty mansion view,  
 Behold the corpses of the children stretcht  
 Before their miserable sire, whose senses,  
 Since he hath slain them, in profoundest sleep  
 Are buried. Mark those knotty cords around  
 The brawny limbs of Hercules, entwined  
 And to the columns in the palace fixed.  
 But old Amphytryon, like a bird who wails  
 \* Over its callow brood, with tardy step  
 Comes hither in the bitterness of grief.

# Hercules Distracted 357

AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

*The Palace gates thrown open, discover HERCULES stretched on the ground and sleeping.*

*Amphitryon.* Ye aged Thebans, will ye not be silent,  
Will ye not suffer him dissolved in sleep  
His miseries to forget?

*Chorus.* These tears, these groans,  
To you, O venerable man, I pay,  
To those slain children, and the chief renowned  
For his victorious conflicts.

*Amphitryon.* Farther still  
Retire; forbear, forbear those clamorous sounds,  
Lest his repose ye break, and from a trance  
The sleeper rouse.

*Chorus.* How dreadful was this slaughter!

*Amphitryon.* Ha! ha! begone, for he in wild confusion  
Is starting up. Why will ye not lament,  
Ye aged men, in a more gentle tone?  
Lest roused from sleep he burst his chains, destroy  
The city, smite his sire, and with the ground  
Lay these proud mansions level.

*Chorus.* This I hold  
Impossible.

*Amphitryon.* Be silent, I will mark  
Whether he breathe: O let me place my ear  
Still closer.

*Chorus.* Sleeps he?

*Amphitryon.* An accursed repose,  
Alas! he tastes, who hath his consort slain,  
And slain his sons with that resounding bow.

*Chorus.* Now wail.

*Amphitryon.* I wail those children's fate.

*Chorus.* Your son,  
Alas! old man, our equal pity claims.

*Amphitryon.* Observe strict silence, for again he rises  
And turns around: I will conceal myself  
Beneath that roof.

*Chorus.* Be of good cheer: night seals  
The eyelids of your son.

*Amphitryon.* Mark, mark me well,  
I am so wretched that without reluctance

I can bid life adieu : but if he kill  
 Me too who am his father, guilt on guilt  
 Shall he accumulate, and join the stings  
 Of parricide to those which from the Furies  
 Who haunt him, he already doth endure.

*Chorus.* Better you then had died, when you prepared  
 T' avenge the slaughtered brothers of Alcmena,  
 And stormed the fortress of the Taphian isle.

*Amphitryon.* Fly, leave the palace instantly ; avoid  
 That frantic man, who from his sleep is roused,  
 For adding soon fresh slaughter to the past,  
 With Bacchanalian transport shall he range  
 Through Cadmus' city.

*Chorus.* Why hast thou, O Jove,  
 Hated thy son so bitterly, and plunged him  
 Into this sea of troubles ?

*Hercules.* [*waking.*] Ha ! I breathe,  
 And view each wonted object, air, and earth,  
 And these bright solar beams. Into what storm,  
 What dreadful perturbation of the soul  
 Have I been plunged ! all heated I transpire,  
 Not from my lungs, but from my feverish heart.  
 Behold me ! wherefore am I bound with chains,  
 Like a disabled ship towed into haven,  
 And by this youthful chest and nervous arm  
 Joined to a broken pillar ? Here I sit  
 Contiguous to the corses of the slain ;  
 My winged shafts lie scattered on the ground,  
 With that unerring bow which erst I bore  
 In war to guard me, and with care preserved.  
 Sent by Eurystheus, am I then arrived  
 A second time at the drear shades beneath ?  
 Neither the rock of Sisypheus, nor Pluto,  
 Nor Ceres' sceptred daughter, do I see.  
 I sure am stricken senseless with amazement,  
 And know not where I am. But ho ! what  
 friend

Is near or at a distance, who will come  
 To give me information ? For each object  
 Which I was erst acquainted with seems strange.

*Amphitryon.* Shall I approach this scene of my afflictions,  
 Ye aged men ?

*Chorus.* I will attend your steps,  
Nor meanly in calamity betray you.

*Hercules.* Why dost thou weep, my sire, and veil those eyes,  
Retiring far from thy beloved son?

*Amphitryon.* My son—for though unhappy, you are mine.

*Hercules.* But what calamity do I endure  
That causes thee to shed these tears?

*Amphitryon.* Your woes

\* Are such, that any god, if he endured  
The same, would groan.

*Hercules.* This hath a dreadful sound :  
But you, my fortunes have not yet explained.

*Amphitryon.* Because if you your senses have recovered,  
Yourself behold them.

*Hercules.* Tell me what thou mean'st—  
If to my charge thou lay'st some recent crime.

*Amphitryon.* If you no longer to the powers of hell  
Are subjected, the truth will I unfold.

*Hercules.* Alas ! how darkly thou again allud'st  
To what my soul suspects.

*Amphitryon.* Your looks I watch  
To see if reason wholly be restored.

*Hercules.* I recollect not that I e'er was frantic.

*Amphitryon.* [to the CHORUS.]  
Shall I unbind the shackles of my son,  
• Or how must we proceed?

*Hercules.* Say who was he  
That bound me ? for with scorn have I been treated.

*Amphitryon.* Thus much of your afflictions may you know :  
Forbear all farther questions.

*Hercules.* Is thy silence  
Sufficient then to teach me what I wish  
To learn?

*Amphitryon.* O Jove, dost thou behold the curses  
Hurled on thy son from envious Juno's throne?

*Hercules.* What dire effects of her inveterate rage  
Have I endured?

*Amphitryon.* Of that vindictive goddess  
No longer think : but to your own afflictions  
Attend.

*Hercules.* Alas ! I utterly am ruined !  
What farther ill wouldst thou disclose?

*Amphitryon.* See there

The corpses of your murdered children lie.

*Hercules.* Alas ! what dreadful objects strike these eyes !

*Amphitryon.* My son, against your progeny you waged  
An inauspicious war.

*Hercules.* Why talk of war ?

Who slew them ?

*Amphitryon.* You, your arrows, and the cause  
Of all these mischiefs, that remorseless goddess.

*Hercules.* Wha. mean'st thou, or what crime have I com-  
mitted,

My father, O thou messenger of ill ?

*Amphitryon.* By frenzy urged. But you such questions ask,  
As I with grief must answer.

*Hercules.* Have I murdered

My consort also ?

*Amphitryon.* All these deeds of horror

That single arm did perpetrate.

*Hercules.* Alas !

A cloud of griefs surrounds me.

*Amphitryon.* For this cause

Your fortunes I lament.

*Hercules.* Have I demolished

My own house too, with Bacchanalian rage

Inspired ?

*Amphitryon.* The whole of what I know amounts

To this, that you are most completely wretched.

*Hercules.* Where did this fatal madness seize me first ?

*Amphitryon.* As round the altar, you, a flaming brand,

To expiate the foul murder which distains

Your hands were bearing.

*Hercules.* Ah ! why lengthen out

A guilty life, when of my dearest children

I am become the murderer ? Why delay

To leap from the high rock, or with a sword

Transpierce this bosom, on myself their blood

Avenging ? or t' avert that infamy

Which waits me, shall I rush into the flames ?

But Theseus comes to bar these desperate counsels,

My kinsman and my friend ; in a true light

To him shall I appear, and the pollution

I have incurred by slaying my own sons

Will be conspicuous to my dearest comrade.  
 What shall I do? or where can I find out  
 A solitude impervious to my woes?  
 On rapid wings, O could I mount, or plunge  
 Into the nether regions of the earth?  
 Give me a veil to darken o'er my head.  
 For 'tis with shame I think on the offence  
 Caused by this deed: but to myself alone  
 Ascribing the defilement of their blood,  
 I wish not to contaminate the guiltless.

THESEUS, AMPHITRYON, HERCULES, CHORUS.

*Theseus.* An armed squadron of Athenian youths  
 I hither bring, who near Asopus' stream  
 Are stationed to assist your son in battle.  
 For to the city of Erectheus' race  
 A rumour came, that Lycus, having seized  
 The sceptre of this land, is waging war  
 'Gainst you. O aged man, I to repay  
 The benefits which Hercules conferred  
 On me, whom from the dreary shades beneath  
 In safety he redeemed, on your behalf  
 Attend, if of this arm, or of my troops,  
 Ye need the help. But, ha, what means the floor  
 With weltering corpses heaped? hath my design  
 Proved ineffectual? am I then arrived  
 Too late to remedy the dreadful mischiefs  
 Which have already ta'en effect? who slew  
 Those children, or whose consort was the dame  
 Whom I behold? for where the boys are laid,  
 No signs appear of any battle fought:  
 But sure I of some other recent ill  
 Now make discovery.

*Amphitryon.* O thou goddess, throned  
 Upon that hill where verdant olives spring.

*Theseus.* Why speak you to me in this piteous tone,  
 And with such prelude?

*Amphitryon.* Grievous are the ills  
 Which we endure through Heaven's severe behest.

*Theseus.* What boys are they ~~of~~ whose remains you weep?

*Amphitryon.* Them did my miserable son beget,



And when begotten slay, this impious murder  
He dared to perpetrate.

*Theseus.* Express yourself  
In more auspicious terms.

*Amphitryon.* I wish t' obey  
Th' injunctions thou hast given.

*Theseus.* \* What dreadful words  
Are these which you have uttered !

*Amphitryon.* In a moment  
Were we undone.

*Theseus.* What mean you, what hath happened ?

*Amphitryon.* This frenzy seized him sprinkled with the  
venom,

Which from the hundred-headed hydra flowed.

*Theseus.* Such Juno's wrath. But who, O aged man,  
Stands 'mong the dead ?

*Amphitryon.* My son, my valiant son,  
Inured to many toils, who in that war  
Where earth's gigantic brood were slain, advanced  
Among the gods to the Phlegræan field  
Armed with his buckler.

*Theseus.* Ah, what mighty chief  
Was e'er so wretched ?

*Amphitryon.* Scarcely shalt thou know  
A man with greater labours vexed, and doomed  
To wander through more regions.

*Theseus.* But why veils he  
Beneath that robe his miserable head ?

*Amphitryon.* Because thy presence, friendship's sacred ties  
Added to those of kindred, and the gore  
Of his slain children, fill his soul with shame.

*Theseus.* I with his griefs am come to sympathise ;  
Uncover him.

*Amphitryon.* That garment from your eyes  
Remove, display your visage to the sun.  
It ill becomes my dignity to weep :  
Yet I a suppliant strive to touch your beard,  
Your knees, your hand, and shed these hoary tears.  
O curb your soul, my son, whose fierceness equals  
That of the lion, else 'twill hurry you  
To bloody impious rage, and make you add  
Mischiefs to mischiefs.

*Theseus.* Ho ! on thee I call,

On thee, who to that seat of misery seem'st  
Fast riveted ; permit thy friends to see  
Thy face : for darkness hath no cloud so black  
As to conceal thy woes. Why dost thou wave  
Thy hand and point to those whom thou hast slain,  
Lest by this converse I pollute myself ?  
I am not loth to share thy woes ; I erst  
Was happy (which my soul is ever bound  
To recollect with gratitude) when thou  
From hell's loathed gloom, the mansion of the  
dead,

Didst safely bear me to the realms of light.  
For I abhor th' attachment of those friends  
Which time impairs, him too who would enjoy  
Their better fortunes, but refuse to sail  
In the same bark with those who prove unblest.  
Rise up, unveil thy miserable head  
And look on me. A noble mind sustains  
Without reluctance what the gods inflict.

*Hercules.* Did you, O Theseus, see me slay my children ?

*Theseus.* I heard, and now behold the ills thou speak'st of.

*Hercules.* Then why did'st thou uncover to the sun  
My guilty head ?

*Theseus.* Why not ? canst thou, a man,  
Pollute the gods ?

*Hercules.* Avaunt, O wretch, avaunt,  
For I am all contagion.

*Theseus.* To a friend  
No mischief from his friend can be transmitted.

*Hercules.* Your conduct I applaud, nor will deny  
That I have served you.

*Theseus.* I who erst received  
Those favours at thy hands, now pity thee.

*Hercules.* I am indeed an object of your pity,  
From having slain my sons.

*Theseus.* For thee I weep,  
Because to me thou heretofore wert kind  
When vexed by other ills.

*Hercules.* Did you e'er meet  
With those who were more wretched ?

*Theseus.* Thy afflictions

Are of such giant bulk, that they to heaven  
Reach from this nether world.

*Hercules.* \* Hence am I ready  
For instant death.

*Theseus.* Canst thou suppose the gods  
Regard thy threats?

*Hercules.* Self-willed are they and cruel,  
And I defy the gods.

*Theseus.* \* Restrain thy tongue,  
Lest thou by uttering such presumptuous words  
Increase thy sufferings.

*Hercules.* I with woes am fraught  
Already, nor remains there space for more.

*Theseus.* But what design'st thou? whither art thou borne  
With frantic rage?

*Hercules.* In death will I return  
To those abodes beneath, whence late I came.

*Theseus.* Thou speak'st the language of a vulgar man.

*Hercules.* Exempt from all calamity yourself,  
On me these admonitions you bestow.

*Theseus.* Are these fit words for Hercules to use,  
Who many toils endured?

*Hercules.* I had not suffered  
Thus much, if any bounds had circumscribed  
My labours.

*Theseus.* Benefactor of mankind,  
And their great friend?

*Hercules.* From them no aid I find;  
But Juno triumphs.

*Theseus.* Greece will not permit thee  
To perish unregarded.

*Hercules.* Hear me now,  
That I with reason your advice may combat;  
To you will I explain both why it is  
And long hath been impossible for me  
To live; and first, because from him, I spring,  
Who, having slain the father of Alcmena,  
Defiled with murder, wedded her who bore me.  
When thus the basis of a family  
Is laid in guilt, the children must be wretched.  
But Jove (or some one who assumed the name  
Of Jove) begot me; hence to Juno's hate

Was I obnoxious. Yet, O let not this  
Offend thine ear, old man, for thee, not Jove,  
I deem my real sire. While yet I hung  
An infant at the breast, Jove's wife by stealth  
Sent snakes into my cradle to destroy me.  
But after I attained the bloom of manhood,  
Of what avail were it, should I recount  
The various labours I endured, what lions,  
What typhons with a triple form, what giants,  
Or what four-footed centaurs, who in crowds  
Rushed to the battle, by this arm were slain ?  
How I despatched the hydra too, that monster  
With heads surrounded, branching out anew,  
And having suffered many toils beside,  
Went to the mansions of the dead, to bring  
Hell's triple-headed dog into the realms  
Of light, for thus Eurystheus had enjoined ?  
But I at last, wretch that I am, this murder  
Did perpetrate, and my own children slay,  
That to their utmost summit I might raise  
The miseries of this house. My fate is such  
That in my native Thebes I must not dwell :  
But if I here continue, to what temple  
Or friends can I repair ? for by such curses  
I now am visited, that none will dare  
To speak to me. To Argos shall I go ?  
How can I, when my country drives me forth ?  
To any other city should I fly,  
The consequence were this : with looks askance  
I should be viewed as one well known, and harassed  
With these reproaches by malignant tongues :  
“ Is not this he, the son of Jove, who murdered  
His children and his consort ? from this land  
Shall not th' accursed miscreant be expelled ? ”  
To him who was called happy once, such change  
Is bitterness indeed : as for the man  
Whose sufferings are perpetual, him, when wretched,  
No kinsman pities. I to such a pitch  
Of woe shall come, I deem, at length, that earth,  
Uttering a voice indignant, will forbid me  
To touch its surface, ocean, o'er its waves,  
And every river, o'er its streams, to pass.

I shall be like Ixion then, with chains  
 Fixed to the wheel. 'Twere better that no Greek  
 With whom I in my happier days conversed  
 Should see me more. What motive can I have  
 For living? or to me of what avail  
 Were it to keep possession of this useless  
 And this unholy being? flushed with joy,  
 Let Jove's illustrious consort, in the dance,  
 Strike with her sandals the resplendent floor  
 Of high Olympus: for she now hath gained  
 Her utmost wish, and from his basis torn  
 The first of Grecian warriors. Who can pray  
 To such a goddess, who, with envy stung,  
 Because Jove loved a woman, hath destroyed  
 The benefactors of the Grecian realm,  
 Those blameless objects of her hate?

*Theseus.*

This mischief

Springs from no god except the wife of Jove.  
 Well dost thou judge, in saying that 'tis easier  
 To give the wholesome counsel, than endure  
 Such agonies. But no man 'scapes unwounded  
 By fortune, and no god; unless the songs  
 Of ancient bards mislead. Have not the gods  
 Among themselves formed lawless marriages?  
 Have they not bound in ignominious chains  
 Their fathers, to obtain a throne? In heaven  
 Yet dwell they, and bear up beneath the load  
 Of all their crimes. But what canst thou allege,  
 If thou, frail mortal as thou art, those ills  
 Immoderately bewail'st to which the gods  
 Without reluctance yield? from Thebes retire,  
 Since thus the laws ordain; and follow me  
 To Pallas' city: when thy hands are there  
 Cleansed from pollution, I to thee will give  
 A palace, and with thee divide my wealth.  
 The presents which the citizens to me  
 Appropriated, when twice seven blooming victims  
 I by the slaughter of the Cretan bull  
 Redeemed, on thee will I bestow. For portions  
 Of land are through the realm to me assigned:  
 These, while thou liv'st henceforth shall by thy name  
 Be called: but after death, when to the shades

Of Pluto thou descend'st, with sacrifice  
And with the sculptured tomb, shall Athens grace  
Thy memory. For her citizens have gained  
This fairest wreath from every Grecian state,  
By yielding succour to the virtuous man  
• Their glories are augmented : and to thee  
Will I repay with gratitude the kindness  
Which thou deserv'st for saving me ; for thou  
Hast need of friends at present : but no friend  
Is wanted when the gods confer renown ;  
For, if he wills, Jove's aid is all-sufficient.

*Hercules.* You hold a language foreign to my griefs.  
But I suppose not that the gods delight  
In lawless nuptials, that their hands are bound  
With galling chains, nor did I e'er believe,  
Nor can I be convinced, that one bears rule  
Over another. For a deity  
If he be truly such, can stand in need  
Of no support. But by some lying bard  
Those miserable fables were devised.  
Although I am most wretched, yet I thought  
I might be charged with cowardice for leaving  
These realms of light. For he who bears not up  
'Gainst adverse fortune, never can withstand  
The weapon of his foe. I am resolved  
To wait for death with firmness : to your city  
Meantime will I retreat, and am most grateful  
For your unnumbered gifts. Unnumbered labours  
Have I been erst acquainted with ; from none  
Did I e'er shrink, these eyes did never stream  
With tears, nor thought I that I e'er should come  
To such a pitch of meanness as to weep :  
But now, it seems, must Fortune be obeyed.  
I am content. Thou, O my aged sire,  
Behold'st my exile, thou in me behold'st  
The murderer of my children : to the tomb  
Consign their corses with funereal pomp,  
And o'er them shed the tributary tear :  
For me the laws allow not to perform  
This office. Let their mother, e'en in death,  
Clasp to her breast, and in her arms sustain,  
Our wretched offspring, whom in evil hour

I slew reluctant. But when thou with earth  
 Hast covered them, thy residence still keep  
 Here in this city, miserably indeed,  
 Yet on thy soul lay this constraint, to bear  
 With me the woes which I most deeply feel.  
 The very sire, ye children, who begot,  
 Murdered you ; no advantage ye derive  
 From what this arm by all my labours gained,  
 And from your father's triumphs no renown.  
 Have not I slain thee too who didst preserve  
 My bed inviolate, and o'er my house  
 Long watch with patient care? Ah me ! my wife,  
 My sons : but how much more to be lamented  
 Am I myself, from them for ever torn?  
 Ye melancholy joys of kisses lavished  
 On their remains, and ye my loathed companions,  
 The weapons which I still retain, but doubt  
 Whether to keep or dash them to the ground ;  
 For they, while at my side they hang, will seem  
 To utter these reproachful words : " With us  
 Thy consort and thy children hast thou slain,  
 Yet thou the very instruments preserv'st  
 Which were their murderers." After such a charge  
 Can I still bear them ? what can I allege?  
 But stripping off those arms with which through  
 Greece

I have achieved full many glorious deeds,  
 Shall I expose myself to those who hate me,  
 And die ignobly? I must not abandon  
 But keep them still, though sorrowing. Aid me,  
 Theseus,

In this one enterprise ; to Argos go  
 And for your friend obtain the great reward  
 Promised for dragging from the shades of hell  
 That execrable hound : lest if by you  
 Deserted, I through grief for my slain children  
 Should come to some calamitous end. Thou  
 realm

Of Cadmus, and ye citizens of Thebes,  
 With tresses shorn, in concert weep ; the tomb  
 Of my slain children visit, there bewail,  
 In one funereal dirge, the dead, and me ;

For smitten with the same dire scourge of fate  
By Juno, we all perish.

*Theseus.* Hapless man,  
Arise ; enough of tears.

*Hercules.* I cannot rise,  
‘These limbs are now grown stiff.

*Theseus.* Calamity  
Subdues the valiant.

*Hercules.* Would I were a stone,  
Insensible to sufferings !

*Theseus.* Cease these plaints ;  
And to the friend who comes to serve thee, give  
Thy hand.

*Hercules.* But let me not wipe off the blood  
Upon your garments.

*Theseus.* Wipe it off, nor scruple,  
For I object not.

*Hercules.* Of my sons bereft,  
In you the likeness of a son I find.

*Theseus.* Fling round my neck thine arm : I’ll lead the  
way.

*Hercules.* A pair of friends : though one of us be wretched.  
Such, O my aged father, is the man  
We ought to make a friend.

*Theseus.* His native realm\*  
Produces an illustrious progeny.

*Hercules.* Turn me around, that I may see my sons.

*Theseus.* Hoping such philtre may thy griefs appease.

*Hercules.* This earnestly I wish for, and would clasp  
My father to this bosom.

*Amphitryon.* Here, lo, here !  
For what my son desires, to me is grateful.

*Theseus.* Of all the labours thou didst erst achieve,  
Hast thou thus lost the memory ?

*Hercules.* All those ills  
Were less severe than what I now experience.

*Theseus.* Should any one behold thee grown unmanly,  
He could not praise thee.

*Hercules.* Though to you I seem  
Degraded to an abject life, I trust

That I my former courage shall resume.

*Theseus.* Where now is the illustrious Hercules ?



*Hercules.* What had you been, if still you in the shades  
Had miserably dwelt?

*Theseus.* Then sunk my courage  
Beneath the meanest of the human race.

*Hercules.* Why then persist in saying that my woes  
Have quite subdued me?

*Theseus.* Onward!

*Hercules.* Good old man,  
Farewell.

*Amphitryon.* Farewell too, O my son.

*Hercules.* My children  
Inter as I directed.

*Amphitryon.* O, my son,  
But who will bury me?

*Hercules.* I.

*Amphitryon.* When will you  
Come hither?

*Hercules.* After thou hast for my children  
Performed that pious office.

*Amphitryon.* How?

*Hercules.* I'll fetch thee

From Thebes to Athens.—Bear into the palace  
My children's corpses which pollute the ground.

But as for me, who have disgraced and plunged

My house in ruin, I will follow Theseus,  
Towed like a battered skiff. Whoe'er prefers  
Wealth or dominion to a steadfast friend,  
Judges amiss.

*Chorus.* Most wretched, drowned in tears,  
Reft of our great protector, we depart.

# THE CHILDREN OF HERCULES

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

IOLAUS.	DEMOPHOON.
COPREUS.	MACARIA.
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN	ALCMENA.
OLD MEN.	MESSENGER.

EURYSTHEUS.

*Scene.*—BEFORE THE ALTAR OF JUPITER, IN THE FORUM AT MARATHON, A CITY IN THE ATHENIAN DOMINIONS.

IOLAUS.

LONG have I held this sentiment : the just  
Are born the streams of bounty to diffuse  
On all around them ; while the man whose soul  
Is warped by interest, useless in the State,  
Untractable and harsh to every friend,  
Lives only for himself ; in words alone  
This doctrine I imbibed not. Through a sense  
Of virtuous shame and reverence for my kindred  
When I in peace at Argos might have dwelt,  
I singly shared the toils of Hercules,  
While he on earth remained ; but now he dwells  
In heaven, I guard his children, though protection  
Be what I need myself. For when their sire  
Forsook this nether world, Eurystheus strove  
Immediately to slay us ; but I 'scaped  
From that oppressor's fangs, and though to me  
Lost is my country, I have saved my life.  
But we poor vagabonds, from city fly  
To some fresh city, ever forced to change  
Our dwelling ; for Eurystheus deems it meet  
To add this wrong to former wrongs, he sends  
His heralds wheresoe'er he hears we settle,  
And claims and drives us forth from every land ;  
No slight resentment from the Argive realm  
Against our friends denouncing, he reminds them  
Of his own prosperous fortunes ; when they see  
My weakness, and these little ones bereft  
Of their great father, to superior might  
They crouch, and force the suppliant to depart.

But with the exiled race of Hercules  
 A voluntary exile, I partake  
 Their evil fortunes, steadfastly resolved  
 Not to betray them ; by malignant tongues  
 It never shall be said, " Oh, mark these orphans !  
 Since their sire's death their kinsman Iolaus  
 Protects them not." But, exiled from all Greece,  
 On reaching Marathon and the domain  
 Subject to the same rulers, here we sit  
 Before the altars of the gods, and sue  
 For their assistance. In this region dwell  
 Two sons of Theseus, I am told, by lot  
 Who portion out this realm, they from Pandion  
 Descend, and to these children are allied.  
 We therefore undertook our present journey  
 To the Athenian realm ; two aged guides  
 Conduct the hapless wanderers ; my attention  
 Is to the boys devoted ; but Alcmena,  
 Entering the adjacent temple, in her arms  
 Tenderly clasps the female progeny  
 Of her departed son. Amid the crowd  
 We fear to introduce these tender virgins,  
 Or place them at the altars of the gods.  
 But Hyllus and his brothers, more mature  
 In years, inquire in what far distant land  
 A fortress for our future residence  
 We yet can find, if we from these domains  
 By force should be expelled. My sons, come hither,  
 Cling to this garment ; for to us I see  
 Eurystheus' herald coming, by whose hate,  
 We wanderers, banished from each friendly realm,  
 Are still pursued. Thou, execrable miscreant,  
 Perish thyself, and perish he who sent thee :  
 For to the noble father of these children  
 Oft hath that tongue enjoined severest toils.

COPREUS IOLAUS.

*Copreus.* What, think'st thou unmolested to enjoy  
 This pleasant seat, and have thy vagrant steps  
 Entered at length a city prompt to fight  
 Thy battles ? for the man who will prefer  
 Thy feeble arm to that of great Eurystheus,

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Exists not. Hence ! why in these useless toils  
Dost thou persist ? thou must return to Argos  
Where they have doomed thee to be stoned.

*Iolaus.* Not thus :

For in this altar shall I find protection,  
And this free country on whose soil we tread.

*Copreus.* Wilt thou constrain me then to have recourse  
To violence ?

*Iolaus.* With forceful hand, nor me  
Nor these poor children shalt thou hence expel.

*Copreus.* Ere long shalt thou perceive that thou hast uttered  
Erroneous prophecies.

*Iolaus.* This ne'er shall be  
Long as I live.

*Copreus.* Depart, for I will seize them  
'Gainst thy consent, and to Eurystheus' power  
Surrender up, for they to him belong.

*Iolaus.* Aid me, ye ancient citizens of Athens,  
For we, though suppliants, forcibly are torn  
E'en from Jove's public altar, and the wreaths  
Twined round our sacred branches are polluted ;  
Shame to your city, insult to the gods.

CHORUS, IOLAUS, COPREUS.

*Chorus.* What clamorous voices from yon altars rise ?  
What mischiefs are impending ?

*Iolaus.* See a man  
Burdened with age, wretch that I am ! lie prostrate.

*Chorus.* Who threw thee down ? what execrable hand—

*Iolaus.* 'Tis he, O stranger, he who to your gods  
Yielding no reverence, strives with impious force  
E'en now, to drag me from this hallowed seat  
Before Jove's altar.

*Chorus.* He ! But from what land  
Cam'st thou, old man, to this confederate state  
Formed of four cities ? From the distant coast  
Of steep Eubœa did ye ply your oars ?

*Iolaus.* The life I lead, O stranger, is not that  
Of vagrant islanders ; but in your realm  
From famed Mycene's bulwarks I arrive.

*Chorus.* Among thy countrymen, old man, what name  
Thou bearest, inform me.

*Iolaus.* Ye perchance knew somewhat

Of Iolaus, great Alcides' comrade,  
A name not quite unnoticed by renown.

*Chorus.* I formerly have heard of him : but say  
Who is the father of that infant race,  
Whom with thy arm thou guid'st ?

*Iolaus.* These are the sons

Of Hercules, O strangers, they, to you,  
And to your city, humble suppliants come.

*Chorus.* On what account, inform me ; to demand  
An audience of the state ?

*Iolaus.* That to their foes

They may not be surrendered up, nor torn  
Forcibly from the altars of your gods,  
And carried back to Argos.

*Copreus.* But thy lords

Who bear rule over thee, and hither trace  
Thy steps, will ne'er be satisfied with this.

*Chorus.* O stranger, 'tis our duty to revere  
The suppliants of the gods : with forceful hand  
Shall no man drag thee from this holy spot,  
This seat of the immortal powers ; dread justice  
Shall guard thee from the wrong.

*Copreus.* Out of your land

The vagrant subjects of Eurystheus drive,  
As I admonish : and this hand shall use  
No violence.

*Chorus.* How impious is that city  
Which disregards the helpless stranger's prayer !

*Copreus.* 'Twere best to interfere not in these broils,  
And to adopt some more expedient counsels.

*Chorus.* You, therefore, to the monarch of this realm  
Should have declared 'your errand, ere thus  
far

You had proceeded : but with brutal force  
These strangers from the altars of the gods  
Presume not to convey, and to this land  
Of freedom yield due reverence.

*Copreus.* But what king

Rules this domain and city ?

*Chorus.* Theseus' son,

Renowned Demophoon.

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*Copreus.* Better I with him

This contest could decide : for all I yet

Have spoken, is but a mere waste of words.

*Chorus.* Behold, he hither comes in haste, and with him,

To hear this cause, his brother Acamas.

DEMOPHOON, IOLAUS, COPREUS, CHORUS.

*Demophoon.* Since by thy speed, old man, thou hast out-  
stripped

Thy juniors, and already reached the shrine

Of Jove, inform me what event hath caused

This multitude t' assemble.

*Chorus.* There the sons

Of Hercules in suppliant posture sit,

And with their wreaths, as you behold, O king,

Adorn the altar ; that is Iolaus,

The faithful comrade of their valiant sire.

*Demophoon.* How needed their distress these clamorous  
shrieks?

*Chorus.* [*turning towards* COPREUS.]

He raised the uproar, when by force he strove

To bear them hence, and on his knees, to earth

Threw the old man, till I for pity wept.

*Demophoon.* Although he in the habit which he wears  
Adopts the mode of Greece, such deeds as these  
Speak the barbarian. But without delay

• On thee it is incumbent now to tell me

The country whence thou cam'st. •

*Copreus.* I am an Argive ;

Thus far to solve your question : but from whence

I come, and on what errand, will I add ;

Mycene's king, Eurystheus, sends me hither

To fetch these vagrants home : yet I, O stranger,

Will with abundant justice, in my actions,

As well as words, proceed ; myself an Argive,

I bear away these Argives, I but seize

The fugitives who from my native land

Escaped, when by the laws which there prevail

They were ordained to bleed. We have a right,

Because we are the rulers of the city,

To execute the sentence, we enact

'Gainst our own subjects. To the sacred hearths

Of many other states when they repaired,  
We urged the self-same reasons, and none ventured  
To be the authors of their own destruction.  
But haply they in you may have perceived  
A foolish tenderness, and hither come,  
Desperate themselves, you also to involve  
In the same perils, whether they succeed  
Or fail in the emprise : for they no hope  
Can cherish, while you yet retain your reason,  
That you alone, in all the wide extent  
Of Greece, whose various regions they have traversed,  
Should pity those calamities which rise  
But from their own imprudence. Now compare  
Th' alternative proposed ; by sheltering them  
In these dominions, or allowing us  
To bear them hence, what gain may you expect ?  
Side but with us, these benefits are yours :  
Eurystheus' self, and Argos' numerous troops,  
Will aid this city with their utmost might ;  
But if, by their seducing language moved,  
Ye harbour groundless pity for their woes,  
Arms must decide the strife. Nor vainly think  
We will desist till we have fully tried  
The temper of our swords. But what excuse  
Have ye to plead ? Of what domains bereft  
Are ye provoked to wage a desperate war  
With the Tiryinthian Argives ? What allies  
Will aid you ? What pretext can ye allege  
To claim funereal honours for the slain ?  
The curses of your city will await  
Such conduct ; for the sake of that old man,  
Whom I may justly call a tomb, a shadow,  
And those unfriended children, should you step  
Into the yawning gulf. Suppose the best  
Which possibly can happen, that a prospect  
Of future good hence rises ; distant hopes  
Fall short of present gain. In riper years  
Ill can these youths be qualified to fight  
Against the Argive host (if this elate  
Your soul with hope), and ere that wished event  
There is a length of intermediate time  
In which ye may be ruined ; but comply

With my advice ; on me no gift bestow,  
 Let me but take what to ourselves belongs,  
 Mycene shall be yours. But oh, forbear  
 To act as ye are wont, nor form a league  
 With those of no account, when mightier friends  
 May be procured.

*Demophoon.*

Who can decide a cause  
 Or ascertain its merits till he hear  
 Both sides distinctly.

*Iolaus.*

In your land, O king,  
 This great advantage, freedom of reply  
 To the malignant charge against me urged,  
 I find, and no man, as from other cities,  
 Shall drive me hence. But we have nothing left  
 For which it now behoves us to contend  
 With him, nor aught, since that decree hath passed,  
 To do with Argos ; from our native land  
 We are cast forth. In this distressful state,  
 How can he drag us back again with justice  
 As subjects of Mycene, to that realm  
 Which hath already banished us ? We there  
 Are only foreigners. But why should he  
 Whom Argos dooms to exile, by all Greece  
 Be also exiled ? Not by Athens sure ;  
 For ne'er will Athens from its blest domains  
 Expel the race of Hercules, appalled  
 By Argos' menaced wrath. For neither Trachis,  
 Nor is that city of Achaia here,  
 Whence thou by boasting of the might of Argos  
 In words like those which thou hast uttered now,  
 These suppliants didst unjustly drive away  
 Though seated at the altars. If thy threats  
 Here too prevail, no longer shall we find  
 Freedom, not e'en in Athens ; but I know  
 Full well the generous temper of its sons,  
 And rather would they die. For to the brave  
 Shame is a load which renders life most hateful.  
 Enough of Athens—for immoderate praise  
 Become invidious ; I remember too  
 How oft I have been heretofore distressed,  
 By overstrained encomiums. But on you  
 How greatly 'tis incumbent to protect



These children will I show, since o'er this land  
 You rule ; for Pittheus was the son of Pelops  
 From Pittheus Æthra sprung, from Æthra Theseus  
 Your father ; from your ancestors to those  
 Of your unhappy suppliants I proceed ;  
 Alcides was the son of thundering Jove  
 And of Alcmena ; from Lysidice,  
 Daughter of Pelops, did Alcmena spring,  
 One common grandsire gave your grandame birth,  
 And theirs ; so near in blood are you to them ;  
 But, O Demophoon, what beyond the ties  
 Of family you to these children owe  
 Will I inform you, and relate how erst  
 With Theseus in one bark I sailed, and bore  
 Their father's shield, when we that belt, the cause  
 Of dreadful slaughter, sought ; and from the caves  
 Of Pluto, Hercules led back your sire.  
 This truth all Greece attests. They in return  
 From you implore this boon, that to their foes  
 They may not be surrendered up, nor torn  
 By force from these your tutelary gods,  
 And banished from this realm. For to yourself  
 'Twere infamous and baneful to your city  
 Should suppliants, exiles, sprung from ancestors  
 The same with yours (ah, miserable me !  
 Behold, behold them !) with a forceful arm  
 Be dragged away. But to your hands, and beard,  
 Lifting these hallowed branches, I entreat you  
 Slight not Alcides' children, undertake  
 Their cause ; and, oh, to them become a kinsman,  
 Become a friend, a father, brother, lord,  
 For better were it to admit these claims,  
 Than suffer them to fall beneath the rage  
 Of Argive tyrants.

*Chorus.*

I with pity heard

Their woes, O king, but now I clearly see  
 How noble birth to adverse fortune yields ;  
 For though they spring from an illustrious sire,  
 Yet meet they with afflictions they deserve not.

*Demophoon.*

Three powerful motives urge me, while I view  
 The misery which attends you, not to spurn  
 These strangers ; first dread Jove, before whose altars

You with these children sit ; next kindred ties,  
 As services performed in ancient days,  
 Give them a claim to such relief from me  
 As from their godlike father mine obtained ;  
 And last of all that infamy which most  
 I ought to loathe ; for if I should permit  
 A foreigner this altar to despoil,  
 I in a land of freedom shall no longer  
 Appear to dwell, but to surrender up,  
 Through fear, the suppliants to their Argive lords,  
 In this extreme of danger. Would to heaven  
 You had arrived with happier auspices ;  
 But tremble not lest any brutal hand  
 Should from this hallowed altar force away  
 You and the children. Therefore go thou back  
 To Argos, and this message to Eurystheus  
 Deliver ; tell him too if there be aught  
 Which 'gainst our guests he can allege, the laws  
 Are open ; but thou shall not drag them hence.

*Copreus.* Not if I prove that it is just, and bring  
 Prevailing reasons ?

*Demophoon.* How can it be just  
 To drive away the suppliant ?

*Copreus.* Hence no shame  
 Shall light on me, but ruin on your head.

*Demophoon.* Should I permit thee to convey them hence  
 • In me 'twere base indeed.

*Copreus.* Let them be banished  
 From your domains, and I elsewhere will seize them.

*Demophoon.* Thou fool, who deem'st thyself more wise than  
 Jove !

*Copreus.* All villains may, it seems, take refuge here.

*Demophoon.* This altar of the gods, to all affords  
 A sure asylum.

*Copreus.* In a different light,  
 This to Mycene's rulers will appear.

*Demophoon.* Am I not then the monarch of this realm ?

*Copreus.* Offer no wrong to them, if you are wise.

*Demophoon.* Do ye then suffer wrong when I refuse  
 To violate the temples of the gods ?

*Copreus.* I would not have you enter on a war  
 Against the Argives.

*Demophoon.*

Equally inclined

Am I to peace, yet will not I yield up

These suppliants.

*Copreus.*

Hence am I resolved to drag

Those who belong to me.

*Demophoon.*

Thou then to Argos

Shalt not with ease return.

*Copreus.*

Soon will I make

Th' experiment and know.

*Demophoon.*

If thou presume

To touch them, thou immediately shalt rue it.

*Copreus.*

I by the gods conjure you not to strike

A herald.

*Demophoon.*

Strike I will, unless that herald

Learn to behave discreetly.

*Chorus.*

Go. And you,

O king, forbear to touch him.

*Copreus.*

I retire :

For weak in combat is a single arm.

But I again shall hither come, and bring

A host of Argives armed with brazen spears :

Unnumbered warriors wait for my return.

The king himself, Eurystheus, is their chief ;

He on the borders of Alcathous' realm

Waits for an answer. He in glittering mail,

Soon as he hears your arrogant reply,

To you, your subjects, this devoted realm,

And all its wasted forests will appear,

For we in vain at Argos should possess

A band so numerous of heroic youths,

If we chastised not your assuming pride.

[Exit COPREUS.]

*Demophoon.*

Away, detested miscreant ; for I fear not

Thy Argos : and thou ne'er, by dragging hence

These suppliants, shalt disgrace me : for this city

As an appendage to the Argive realm

I hold not, but its freedom will maintain.

*Chorus.*

'Tis time each sage precaution to exert,

Ere to the confines of this land advance

The troops of Argos : for Mycene's wrath

Is terrible in combat, and more fierce

Than heretofore will they invade us now.

For to exaggerate facts beyond the truth  
Is every herald's custom. To his king,  
How many specious tales do you suppose  
Of the atrocious insults he endured,  
He will relate, and add how he the loss  
Of life endangered?

*Iolaus.*

To the sons devolve  
No honours which exceed the being born  
Of an illustrious and heroic sire,  
And wedding into virtuous families.  
But on that man no praise will I bestow,  
Who by his lusts impelled, among the wicked  
A nuptial union forms; hence to his sons  
Disgrace, instead of pleasure, he bequeaths.  
For noble birth repels adversity  
Better than abject parentage. When sinking  
Under the utmost pressure of our woes,  
We find these friends and kinsmen, who alone  
Amid the populous extent of Greece  
Stand forth in our behalf. Ye generous youths,  
Now give them your right hands, and in return  
Take those of your protectors: O my sons,  
Draw near: we have made trial of our friends.  
If ye again behold your native walls,  
Possess the self-same mansions, and the honours  
Which your illustrious father erst enjoyed;  
• These deem your saviours and your friends, nor wield  
Against their fostering land the hostile spear.  
On your remembrance let these benefits  
Be ever stamped, and hold this city dear;  
For they deserve your reverence, who from us  
Repel so great a nation, such a swarm  
Of fierce Pelasgian troops: and, though they see  
Our poverty and exile, have refused  
To yield us up, or banish from their realm.  
Both while I live, and after the cold grave  
Receives me at the destined hour, my friend,  
I with loud voice your merits will applaud,  
Approaching mighty Theseus, and my words  
Shall soothe your father's ear when I recount  
With what humanity you have received us,  
And how protected the defenceless sons

Of Hercules : by your illustrious birth  
 Distinguished, you the glories of your sire  
 Through Greece maintain : sprung from a noble lineage,  
 Yet are you one among that chosen few  
 Who in no instance deviate from the virtues  
 Of your great ancestry : although 'mid thousands  
 Scarce is a single instance to be found .  
 Of those who emulate their father's worth.

*Chorus.* This country, in a just and honest cause,  
 Is ever prompt to succour the distressed.  
 Hence in its friends' behalf hath it sustained  
 Unnumbered toils, and now another conflict  
 I see impending.

*Demophoon.* Rightly hast thou spoken,  
 And in such toils I feel a conscious pride.  
 These benefits shall never be forgotten ;  
 But an assembly of the citizens  
 I instantly will summon, and arrange  
 A numerous squadron, to receive the onset  
 Of fierce Mycene's host, first sending spies  
 To meet them, lest they unawares assail us.  
 For the bold warrior, who without delay  
 Goes forth to battle, keeps the foe aloof.  
 I also will collect the seers, and slay  
 The victims ; but do you, old man, meanwhile  
 Enter the palace with these children, leaving  
 Jove's altar : for my menial train are there,  
 Who will with fond solicitude attend you,  
 Although I am not present : but go in.

*Iolaus.* I will not leave the altar ; on this seat  
 We suppliants will remain, and pray to Jove,  
 That prosperous fortunes may attend your city.  
 But when you from this conflict are with glory  
 Released, we to your palace will repair ;  
 Nor are the gods, who war on our behalf,  
 O king, inferior to the gods of Argos.  
 For o'er that city, Jove's majestic consort,  
 Juno, but here Minerva doth preside.  
 This I maintain, that nought ensures success  
 Beyond the aid of mightier deities,  
 Nor will imperial Pallas be subdued.

[*Exit DEMOPHOON.*]

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CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Boast as thou wilt, and urge thy proud demand,  
This nation disregards thy ire,  
Thou stranger from the Argive land.  
Nor can thy sounding words control  
The steadfast purpose of my soul :  
Great Athens, by her lovely choir  
Distinguished, shall unstained preserve  
Her ancient glory, nor from virtue swerve  
But thou, devoid of wisdom, dost obey  
The son of Sthenelus, the tyrant's impious sway.

II.

Who com'st amidst an independent state,  
In nought inferior to the strength  
Of Argos, and with brutal hate  
Dar'st, though a foreigner, to seize  
The exiles, who our deities  
Implore, and in these realms at length  
From their distress obtain a shield :  
Thou e'en to sceptred monarchs will not yield,  
Yet no just plea thy subtle tongue hath found.  
How can such conduct warp the man whose judgment's  
sound ?

III.

Peace is the object of my dear delight :  
But thou, O tyrant, thou whose breast  
Well may I deem by frenzy is possessed,  
If 'gainst this city thou exert thy might,  
Pant'st after trophies which thou ne'er shalt gain.  
Bearing targe and brazen lance  
Others with equal arms advance.  
O thou, who fondly seek'st th' embattled plain,  
Shake not these turrets, spare the haunt  
Of every gentle grace.—Thou wretch, avaunt.

DEMOPHOON, IOLAUS, CHORUS.

*Iolaus.* Why com'st thou hither, O my son, with eyes  
Expressive of affliction ? from the foe

What recent information canst thou give?  
 Do they delay their march, are they at hand,  
 Or bring'st thou any tidings? for the threats  
 That herald uttered sure will be accomplished.  
 Blest in the favour of the gods, the tyrant  
 Exults, I know, and arrogantly deems  
 That he o'er Athens shall prevail; but Jove  
 Chastises the presumptuous.

*Demophoon.*

Argos comes  
 With numerous squadrons, and its king Eurystheus,  
 Myself beheld him. It behoves the man  
 Who claims the merit of an able chief,  
 Not to depend upon his spies alone  
 To mark the foe's approach. But with his host  
 He hath not yet invaded these domains,  
 But halting on yon mountain's topmost ridge  
 Observes (I from conjecture speak) the road  
 By which he may lead forth his troops to battle,  
 And where he in this realm with greatest safety  
 May station them. Already have I made  
 Each preparation to repel their onset.  
 The city is in arms, the victims stand  
 Before the altars, with their blood t' appease  
 The wrath of every god, and due lustrations  
 Are sprinkled by the seers, that o'er our foes  
 We may obtain a triumph, and preserve  
 This country. Every prophet who expounds  
 The oracles, convening, have I searched  
 Into each sage response of ancient times,  
 Or public or concealed, on which depends  
 The welfare of the realm. In all beside  
 Differ Heaven's mandates: but one dread behest  
 Runs through the several auspices, to Ceres  
 They bid me sacrifice some blooming maid  
 Who from a nobler sire derives her birth.  
 Zeal have I shown abundant in your cause,  
 But will not slay my daughter, nor constrain  
 Any Athenian citizen to make  
 Such an abhorred oblation: for the man  
 Exists not, who is so devoid of reason,  
 As willingly to yield his children-up  
 With his own hands. But what afflicts me most

Is this : tumultuous crowds appear ; some cry,  
 'Tis just that we the foreign suppliants aid,  
 But others blame my folly. If no means  
 Can be devised to satisfy them all,  
 Soon will a storm of civil war arise.  
 See thou to this, and think of some expedient,  
 How ye and how this country may be saved,  
 Without the citizens' calumnious tongues  
 My fame assailing. For I rule not here  
 With boundless power, like a barbarian king ;  
 Let but my deeds be just, and in return  
 Shall I experience justice.

*Chorus.* Will not Jove

Suffer this city to exert its courage,  
 And aid these hapless strangers as we wish ?

*Iolaus.* Our situation, O my sons, resembles  
 That of the mariners, who having 'scaped  
 The storm's relentless fury, when in sight  
 Of land, are from the coast by adverse winds  
 Driven back into the deep. Thus from this realm  
 Just as we reach the shore, like shipwrecked men,  
 Are we expelled. O inauspicious Hope,  
 Why didst thou soothe me with ideal joy,  
 Although it was ordained that thou should'st leave  
 Thy favours incomplete ? The king deserves  
 At least to be excused, if he consent not  
 To slay his subjects' daughters, to this city  
 My praise is due, and if the gods would place me  
 In the same prosperous fortunes, from my soul  
 Your benefits should never be effaced.  
 But now, alas ! no counsel can I give  
 To you, my children. Whither shall we turn ?  
 What god have we neglected ? To what land  
 Have we not fled for shelter ? We must perish,  
 We shall be yielded up. My being doomed  
 To die, I heed but for this cause alone,  
 That by my death I shall afford delight  
 To our perfidious foes. But, O my sons,  
 For you I weep, I pity you, I pity  
 Alcmena, aged mother of your sire,  
 Oh, most unhappy in a life too long !  
 I too am wretched, who unnumbered toils



Have fruitlessly endured ; it was ordained,  
 It was ordained, alas ! that we should fall  
 Into the hands of our relentless foes,  
 And meet a shameful, miserable death.  
 Know you, what still remains for you to do,  
 On my behalf? For all my hopes of saving  
 The children are not vanished. In their stead  
 Me to the Argive host surrender up,  
 O king, and rush not into needless danger,  
 Yet save these children. To retain a love  
 Of life becomes me not ; I yield it up  
 Without regret. It is Eurystheus' wish  
 The rather to seize me, and to expose  
 To infamy, because I was the comrade  
 Of Hercules ; for frenzy hath possessed  
 His soul. The wise man, e'en in those he hates,  
 Had rather find discretion than a want  
 Of understanding ; for a foe endured  
 With sense will pay due reverence to the vanquished.

*Chorus.* Forbear, old man, thus hastily to blame  
 This city ; for to us though it might prove  
 More advantageous, yet to our disgrace  
 Would it redound, should we betray our guests.

*Demophoon.* A generous, but impracticable, scheme  
 Is that thou hast proposed : for Argos' king  
 In quest of thee no squadrons hither leads.  
 What profit to Eurystheus from the death  
 Of one so old as thou art could arise?  
 He wants to murder *these* : for to their foes  
 The rising blossoms of a noble race,  
 To whom the memory of their father's wrongs  
 Is present, must be dreadful : for all this  
 He cannot but foresee. But if thou know  
 Of any other counsel more expedient,  
 Adopt it ; for my soul hath been perplexed,  
 Since that oracular response I heard  
 Which fills me with unwelcome apprehensions.  
 [Exit DEMOPHOON.]

MACARIA, IOLAUS, CHOEUS.

*Macaria.* Deem not that I, O strangers, am too bold  
 Because I from my chamber venture forth ;

This is my first request : for silence, joined  
 With modesty and a domestic life,  
 Is woman's best accomplishment. I heard  
 Your groans, O Iolaus, and advanced  
 Though not appointed by our house to act  
 As their ambassadress ; in some degree  
 Yet am I qualified for such an office,  
 I have so great an interest in the weal  
 Of these my brothers ; on my own account  
 I also wish to hear if any ill,  
 Added to those you have already suffered,  
 Torture your soul.

*Iolaus.* Not now for the first time,  
 On thee, O daughter, most of all the children  
 Of Hercules my praise can I bestow :  
 But our ill-fated house, just as it seemed  
 Emerging from its past disgraces, sinks  
 Afresh into inextricable ruin.  
 The king informs us, that the seers, whose voice  
 Expounds the will of heaven, have signified  
 No bull nor heifer, but some blooming maid  
 Who from a noble sire derives her birth,  
 Must be the victim, if we would redeem  
 The city and ourselves from utter ruin ;  
 Here then are we perplexed : for his own children  
 He says he will not sacrifice, nor those  
 Of any of his subjects. Though to me  
 Indeed he speaks not plainly, in some sort  
 He intimates, that if we by no means  
 Can extricate ourselves from these distresses,  
 We must find out some other land to flee to,  
 For he this realm would from destruction save.

*Macaria.* May we indulge the hope of our escape  
 Upon these terms ?

*Iolaus.* These only : in all else  
 With prosperous fortunes crowned.

*Macaria.* No longer dread  
 The spear of Argos, for myself, old man,  
 Am ready ere they doom me to be slain,  
 And here stand forth a voluntary victim.  
 For what could we allége on our behalf,  
 If Athens condescend to undergo

Dangers so great, while we who have imposed  
 These toils on others, though within our reach  
 Lie all the means of being saved, yet shrink  
 From death? Not thus : we should provoke the laugh  
 Of universal scorn, if, with loud groans,  
 We suppliants, at the altars of the gods,  
 Should take our seats, and prove devoid of courage,  
 From that illustrious father though we spring.  
 How can the virtuous reconcile such conduct?  
 'This to our glory would forsooth redound  
 (O may it never happen !) when this city  
 Is taken, should we fall into the hands  
 Of our triumphant foes, when after all  
 Some noble maid reluctant must be dragged  
 To Pluto's loathed embrace. But from these realms  
 Cast forth, should I become an abject vagrant,  
 Must I not blush when any one inquires,  
 "Why came ye hither with your suppliant branches  
 Too fond of life? Retreat from these domains,  
 For we no aid to cowards will afford."  
 But if when these are dead, my single life  
 Be saved, I cannot entertain a hope  
 That I shall e'er be happy : through this motive  
 Have caused full many to betray their friends.  
 For who with a deserted maid will join,  
 Or in the bonds of wedlock, or desire  
 That I to him a race of sons should bear?  
 I therefore hold it better far to die,  
 Than to endure, without deserving them,  
 Such foul indignities, as can seem light  
 To her alone, who, from a noble race  
 Like mine, descends not : to the scene of death  
 Conduct, with garlands crown me, and prepare,  
 If ye think fit, th' initiatory rites ;  
 Ye hence the foe shall conquer : for this soul  
 Shrinks not with mean reluctance. I engage  
 For these my brothers, and myself, to bleed  
 A willing victim ; for with ease detached  
 From life, I have imbibed this best of lessons,  
 To die with firmness in a glorious cause.

*Chorus.* Alas ! what language shall I find, t' express  
 My admiration of the lofty speech

I from this virgin bear, who for her brothers  
Resolves to die? What tongue can utter words  
More truly generous ; or what man surpass  
Such deeds as these?

*Iolans.* Thou art no spurious child,  
But from the godlike seed of Hercules,  
O daughter, dost indeed derive thy birth.  
Although thy words are such as cannot shame,  
Thy fate afflicts me. Yet will I propose  
What may with greater justice be performed.  
Together call the sisters of this maid,  
And to atone for the whole race, let her  
On whom th' impartial lot shall fall, be slain ;  
But without such decision 'tis not just  
That thou should'st die.

*Macaria.* I will not die as chance  
The lot dispenses ; for I hence should forfeit  
All merit : name not such a scheme, old man.  
If me ye will accept, and of my zeal  
Avail yourselves, I gladly yield up life  
Upon these terms, but stoop not to constraint.

*Iolaus.* The speech thou now hast uttered soars beyond  
What thou at first didst say, though that was  
noble:

But thou thy former courage dost surpass  
By this fresh instance of exalted courage,  
• The merit of thy former words, by words  
More meritorious. Daughter, I command not,  
Nor yet oppose thy death : for thou by dying  
Wilt serve thy brothers.

*Macaria.* You in cautious terms  
Command me : fear not, lest on my account  
You should contract pollution : for to die  
Is my free choice. But follow me, old man,  
For in your arms would I expire : attend,  
And o'er my body cast the decent veil :  
To dreadful slaughter dauntless I go forth,  
Because I from that father spring, whose name  
With pride I utter.

*Iolaus.* At the hour of death  
I cannot stand beside thee.

*Macaria.* Grant but this,

*That when I breathe my last, I may be tended  
By women, not by men.*

*Iolaus.*

It shall be thus,

O miserable virgin : for in me  
'Twere base, if I neglected any rite  
That decency enjoins, for many reasons ;  
Because thy soul is great, because 'tis just,  
And of all women I have ever seen,  
Because thou art most wretched. But from these  
And from thy aged kinsman, if thou wish  
For aught, to me thy last behests address.

*Macaria.* Adieu, my venerable friend, adieu !

Instruct these boys in every branch of wisdom,  
And make them like yourself, they can attain  
No higher pitch ; strive to protect them still.  
And for their sake that valued life prolong ;  
Your children we, to you our nurture owe.  
Me you behold, mature for bridal joys,  
Dying to save them. But may ye, my band  
Of brothers who are here, be blest, and gain  
All those advantages, which to procure  
For you, the falchion shall transpierce my breast  
Revere this good old man, revere Alcmena  
Your father's aged mother, and these strangers.  
Should ye be ever rescued from your woes,  
Should gracious Heaven permit you to revisit  
Your native land, forget not to inter,  
With such magnificence as I deserve,  
Your benefactress, for I have not proved  
Deficient in attention to your welfare,  
But die to save our family. To me  
These monumental honours shall suffice  
Instead of children, or the virgin state,  
If there be aught amid the realms beneath,  
But 'tis my wish there may not : for if grief  
On us frail mortals also there attend,  
I know not whither any one can turn :  
For by the wise hath death been ever deemed  
The most effectual cure for every ill.

*Iolaus.* O thou, distinguished by thy lofty soul,  
Be well assured thy glory shall outshine  
That of all other women ; both in life

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And death, shalt thou be honoured by thy friends.  
 But ah, farewell ! for with ill-omened words  
 I tremble lest we should provoke the goddess,  
 Dread Proserpine, to whom thou now art sacred.

[Exit MACARIA.]

My sons, I perish : grief unnerves my frame ;  
 Support and place me in the hallowed seat :  
 And, O my dearest children, o'er my face  
 Extend this garment : for I am not pleased  
 With what is done : yet, had not Heaven's response  
 Found this completion, we must all have died ;  
 For we must then have suffered greater ills  
 Than these, which are already most severe.

## CHORUS.

### ODE.

In just proportion, as the gods ordain,  
     Is bliss diffused through life's short span,  
     Or sorrow portioned out to man :  
     No favoured house can still maintain  
     From age to age its prosperous state,  
 For swift are the vicissitudes of fate,  
     Who now assails pride's towering crest,  
     Now makes the drooping exile blest.  
     From destiny we cannot fly ;  
     No wisdom can her shafts repel ;  
 But he who vainly dares her power defy  
     Compass'd with endless toils shall dwell.  
     Ask not from Heaven with impious prayer,  
     Blessings it cannot grant to man,  
     Nor waste in misery life's short span  
     O'erwhelmed by querulous despair.  
 The nymph goes forth to meet a noble death,  
     Her brothers and this land to save,  
     And fame, with tributary breath  
     Shall sound her praises in the grave.  
     For dauntless virtue finds a way  
 Through labours which her progress would delay.  
     Such deeds as these, her father grace  
     And add fresh splendour to her race,

But if with reverential awe thou shed  
 Over the virtuous dead  
 A tear of pity, in that tear I'll join,  
 Inspired with sentiments like thine.

SERVANT, IOLAUS, CHORUS.

*Servant.* Ye children, hail ! but where is Iolaus,  
 That aged man ; and hath your grandame left  
 Her seat before the altar ?

*Iolaus.* Here am I  
 If aught my presence can avail.

*Servant.* On earth  
 Why art thou stretched, what means that downcast  
 look ?

*Iolaus.* Domestic cares have harrowed up my soul.

*Servant.* Lift up thy head, arise.

*Iolaus.* I am grown old,  
 And all my strength is vanished.

*Servant.* But to thee  
 I bring most joyful tidings.

*Iolaus.* Who art thou ?  
 Where have I seen thee ? I remember not.

*Servant.* Hyllus' attendant, canst thou not distinguish  
 These features ?

*Iolaus.* O my friend, art thou arrived  
 To snatch me from despair ?

*Servant.* Most certainly :  
 Moreover the intelligence I bring  
 Will make thee happy.

*Iolaus.* Thee I call, come forth,  
 Alcmena, mother or a noble son,  
 And listen to these acceptable tidings :  
 Full long thy soul, for those who now approach,  
 Was torn with grief, lest they should ne'er return.

ALCMENA, SERVANT, IOLAUS, CHORUS.

*Alcmena.* Whence with your voice resounds this echoing  
 dome,

O Iolaus, is another herald  
 From Argos come, who forcibly assails you ?  
 My strength indeed is small, yet be assured  
 Of this, presumptuous stranger, while I live

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Thou shalt not bear them hence. May I no more  
Be deemed the mother of that godlike son,  
When I submit to this. But if thou dare  
To touch the children, with two aged foes  
Ignobly wilt thou strive.

*Iolaus.* Be of good cheer,  
Thou hoary matron, banish these alarms ;  
No herald with a hostile message comes  
From Argos.

*Alcmena.* Why then raised you that loud voice,  
The harbinger of fear?

*Iolaus.* That from the temple  
Thou might'st come forth, and join us.

*Alcmena.* What you mean  
I comprehend not. Who is this?

*Iolaus.* He tells us  
Thy grandson marches hither.

*Alcmena.* Hail, O thou  
Who bear'st these welcome tidings? but what brings  
him  
To these domains? Where is he? What affairs  
Prevented him from coming hither with thee,  
To fill my soul with transport?

*Servant.* He now marshals  
The forces which attend him.

*Alcmena.* In this conference  
Am I no longer then allowed to join?

*Iolaus.* Thou art : but 'tis my business to inquire  
Into these matters.

*Servant.* Which of his transactions  
Say art thou most solicitous to know?

*Iolaus.* The number of the troops he leads?

*Servant.* Is great,  
I cannot count them.

*Iolaus.* The Athenian chiefs  
Are sure apprised of this.

*Servant.* They are apprised,  
And the left wing is formed.

*Iolaus.* Then the whole host  
Arrayed in arms is ready for the battle.

*Servant.* The victims to a distance from the ranks  
Already are removed.



*Iolaus.*

But at what distance

Is the encampment of the Argive warriors?

*Servant.* So near that we their leader can distinguish.

*Iolaus.* What is he doing ; marshalling our foes?

*Servant.* This we conjecture : for I could not hear

His voice : but I must go ; for I my lord

Will not abandon when he nobly braves

The dangers of the field.

*Iolaus.*

I too with thee

Will join him ; for the same are our intentions,

As honour bids us, to assist our friends.

*Servant.* Unwisely hast thou spoken.

*Iolaus.*

With my friends

Shall not I then the stubborn conflict share ?

*Servant.* That strength which erst was thine is now no more

*Iolaus.* Can I not pierce their shields ?

*Servant.*

Thou may'st : but first

More likely, fall thyself.

*Iolaus.*

No foe will dare

To meet me face to face.

*Servant.*

By thy mere looks,

With that debilitated arm, no wound

Canst thou inflict.

*Iolaus.*

My presence in the field

Will to our troops give courage, and augment

Their number.

*Servant.*

Of small service to thy friends

Will thy appearance prove.

*Iolaus.*

Detain me not :

I for some glorious action am prepared.

*Servant.* Thou hast the will to act, but not the power.

*Iolaus.* I will not be reproached for loitering here,

Say what thou wilt beside.

*Servant.*

But without arms

How wilt thou face yon warriors sheathed in mail ?

*Iolaus.* The various implements of war are lodged

Beneath these roofs ; with freedom will I use,

And if I live, return them ; if I die,

The god will not demand them back again.

Go then into the temple, and reach down

Those martial trappings from the golden nails

On which they hang, and bring them to me swiftly.

For this were infamous, while some are fighting,  
If others loiter slothfully behind. [*Exit SERVANT.*]

*Chorus.* Time hath not yet debased that lofty soul  
'Tis vigorous, though thy body be decayed.  
Why should'st thou enter on these fruitless toils,  
Which only injure thee, and to our city  
Can be of little service? on thy age  
Should'st thou reflect, and lay aside attempts  
That are impossible, for by no arts  
The long-lost force of youth canst thou regain.

*Alcmena.* What schemes are these? distempered in your  
mind,

Me and my children mean you to abandon?

*Iolaus.* The battle is man's province: to thy care  
Them I consign.

*Alcmena.* But if you die, what means  
Have I of being saved?

*Iolaus.* The tender care  
Of the surviving children of thy son.

*Alcmena.* Should they too meet with some severe mishap,  
Which may the gods forbid.

*Iolaus.* These generous strangers  
Will not betray thee; banish every fear.

*Alcmena.* In them I trust: I have no other friend.

*Iolaus.* Jove too, I know, is mindful of thy toils.

*Alcmena.* I will not speak in disrespectful terms  
Of Jove: but whether he his plighted troth  
Have kept, full well he knows.

*Servant.* [*returning.*] Thou here behold'st  
The brazen panoply, now haste to sheathe  
Thy limbs in mail; the battle is at hand,  
And Mars detests a loiterer: if thou fear  
Accoutrements so ponderous, to the field  
Advance disarmed, nor till thou join the ranks  
Wear these unwieldy trappings; for meantime  
I in my hands their burden will sustain.

*Iolaus.* Well hast thou spoken; with those arms attend me  
Ready for the encounter, place a spear  
In my right hand and under my left arm  
Hold me, and guide my steps.

*Servant.* Shall I conduct  
A warrior like a child?

- Iolaus.* I must tread sure,  
Else 'twere an evil omen.
- Servant.* Would thy power  
Equalled thy zeal.
- Iolaus.* Haste : greatly 'twill afflict me  
If, left behind, I cannot join the fray.
- Servant.* Slow are thy steps, and hence thou deem'st I move  
not.
- Iolaus.* Behold'st thou not the swiftness of my pace ?
- Servant.* Thou to thyself I see appear'st to hasten,  
Although thou gain'st no ground.
- Iolaus.* When in the field  
Thou seest me, thou wilt own I speak the truth.
- Servant.* What great exploit achieving ? I could wish  
That thou might'st prove victorious.
- Iolaus.* Through his shield  
Some foe transfixing.
- Servant.* We at length may reach  
Th' embattled plain, but this I greatly fear.
- Iolaus.* Ah, would to heaven, that thou, my withered arm,  
Again wert vigorous, as in former days  
Thee, I remember, when thou didst lay waste  
The Spartan realms with Hercules ; thus fight  
My battles now, and singly will I triumph  
Over Eurystheus, for that dastard fears  
To face the dangers of th' embattled field :  
Too apt in our ideas to unite  
Valour with wealth, yet to the prosperous man  
Superior wisdom falsely we ascribe.

[*Exeunt* IOLAUS and SERVANT.]

# CHORUS.

## ODE.

### I. I.

O fostering Earth, resplendent Moon,  
Who gladd'st the dreary shades of night,  
And thou, enthroned at broadest noon,  
Hyperion, 'midst exhaustless light,  
To me propitious tidings bring,  
Raise to the skies a festive sound,  
And waft the gladsome notes around,

Till, from the palace of our king,  
They echo through Minerva's fane :  
My house, my country, to maintain  
Against the ruthless spoiler's pride,  
Menaced because this realm extends  
Protection to its suppliant friends,  
I with the sword our contest will decide.

## I. 2.

Although there seem just cause for dread,  
When cities like Mycene blest,  
Whose triumphs fame hath widely spread  
Enter this region to invest  
Our bulwarks, harbouring ruthless hate.  
Think, O my country, think what shame,  
Should we reject the suppliant's claim  
Appalled by Argos' haughty state.  
Resistless Jove shall aid the spear  
I brandish unappalled by fear ;  
The tribute of eternal praise  
From all that breathe, to him is due :  
Nor magnified by our weak view  
Shall men above the gods their trophies raise.

## II. I.

Descend with venerable mien,  
O thou our guardian and our queen,  
For on thy fostering soil we stand,  
These walls were reared by thy command,  
Drive from our menaced gates the lawless host,  
Suppress that Argive tyrant's boast ;  
For if by you unaided, is this hand  
Too weak their fury to withstand.

## II. 2.

Thee, O Minerva, we adore,  
Thy altar ever streams with gore :  
We on each moon's concluding day  
To thee our public homage pay ;  
Through every fane harmonious numbers sound,  
Sweet minstrelsy then breathes around,  
And th' echoing hills their nightly dance repeat  
As the nymphs move with agile feet.

## SERVANT, ALCMENA, CHORUS.

- Servant.* O royal dame, the message that to you  
 I bring, is both concise, and what reflects  
 On me abundant glory to relate,  
 In fight have we prevailed, and trophies reared  
 On which the armour of your foes is hung.
- Alcmena.* This day hath brought thee hither, O my friend  
 Thy freedom for such tidings to receive :  
 But one anxiety there still remains  
 To which thou leav'st me subject ; much I fear  
 For the important lives of those I love.
- Servant.* They live, and have obtained from all the host  
 The greatest fame.
- Alcmena.* And Iolaus too,  
 My aged friend ?
- Servant.* Yet more, he hath performed  
 Through the peculiar favour of the gods  
 Exploits most memorable.
- Alcmena.* What glorious deed  
 Hath he achieved in fight ?
- Servant.* From an old man,  
 He is grown young again.
- Alcmena.* Thou speak'st of things  
 Most wonderful. But first, how fought our friends  
 With such success, I wish thee to inform me.
- Servant.* All that hath passed, at once will I relate.  
 When to each other in the field opposed,  
 We had arranged both armies, and spread forth  
 The van of battle to its full extent,  
 Hyllus alighting from his chariot, stood  
 In the midway 'twixt either host, and cried :  
 "Thou leader of the Argive troops, who com'st  
 With hostile fury to invade this land,  
 Thy interests recommend what I propose,  
 Nor can Mycene suffer from the loss  
 If thou deprive her of a single warrior ;  
 Therefore with me encounter hand to hand,  
 And if thou slay me, seize and bear away  
 The sons of Hercules ; but if thou die,  
 My palace and hereditary rank  
 Permit me to enjoy." The troops assented,

And praised what he had spoken as the means  
Of finishing their labours, and a proof  
Of his exalted courage. But Eurystheus  
Unmoved by reverence for th' assembled host  
Who heard the challenge, and with terror smitten  
Forgot the general's part, nor dared to face  
The lifted spear, but acted like a dastard :  
Yet he who was thus destitute of courage  
Came to enslave the sons of Hercules.  
Hyllus again retreated to his rank ;  
The prophets too, when they perceived no peace  
Could be effected by a single combat,  
Without delay the blooming virgin slew,  
Auspicious victim, from whose pallid lips  
Her trembling spirit fled. The lofty car  
Some mounted, o'er their sides while others flung  
Their bucklers to protect them. To his host,  
Meantime the king of Athens, in a strain  
Worthy of his exalted courage, spoke :  
" Ye citizens, the land to which ye owe  
Your nourishment and birth, now claims your aid."  
Equally loth to sully the renown  
Of Argos and Mycene, in like terms  
The foe besought his partners of the war  
Their utmost vigour to exert. No sooner  
Had the loud signal by Etutria's trump  
Been given, than they in thickest battle joined.  
Think with what crash their brazen shields resounded,  
What groans and intermingled shouts were heard !  
First through our lines the host of Argos burst,  
And in their turn gave way : then foot to foot,  
And man to man opposed, in stubborn conflict  
We all persisted : multitudes were slain ;  
But in this language either chief his troops  
Encouraged : " O ye citizens of Athens,  
O ye who till the fruitful Argive field,  
Will ye not from your native land repel  
The foul disgrace ? " But with our utmost efforts  
Scarce could we put to flight the Argive host.  
When Iolaus saw young Hyllus break  
The ranks of battle, he with lifted hands  
Entreated him to place him in his car,

Then seized the reins, and onward in pursuit  
 Of the swift coursers of Eurystheus drove.  
 As to the sequel ; from report alone  
 Let others speak, I tell what I have seen :  
 While through Pallenè's streets he passed, where rise  
 Minerva's altars, soon as he descried  
 The chariot of Eurystheus, he a prayer  
 Addressed to blooming Hebe, and to Jove,  
 That for that single day he might recover  
 The pristine vigour of his youth, and punish  
 His foes as they deserve. You now shall hear  
 What a miraculous event ensued ;  
 Two stars 'bove Iolau's chariot stood,  
 And overshadowed it with gloomy clouds,  
 Which, by the wise 'tis said, were Hercules  
 Your son, and blooming Hebe : from that mist  
 Which veiled the skies, the chief grown young again,  
 Displayed his vigorous arms, and near the rocks  
 Of Scyron, seized Eurystheus in his car.  
 Binding his hands with chains, he hither brings  
 The Argive tyrant, a distinguished prize,  
 Who once was happy ; but on all mankind  
 Loudly inculcates by his present fortunes  
 This lesson : not too rashly to ascribe  
 Felicity to him who in appearance  
 Is prosperous, but to wait till we behold  
 His close of life ; for fortune day by day  
 Doth waver.

*Chorus.*                   Thou great author of success,  
 O Jove, at length am I allowed to view  
 The day, by which my terrors are dispelled.

*Alcmena.* 'Twas late indeed, when thou, O Jove, didst look  
 On my afflictions ; yet am I to thee  
 Most grateful for the kindness thou hast shown me.  
 And though I erst believed not that my son  
 Dwells with the gods, I clearly know it now.  
 Now, O my children, ye from all your toils  
 Shall be set free, and of Eurystheus, doomed  
 With shame to perish, burst the galling yoke,  
 Behold your father's city, the rich fields  
 Of your inheritance again possess,  
 And sacrifice to your paternal gods,

## The Children of Hercules 401

From whom excluded, in a foreign land  
Ye led a wandering miserable life.  
But with what sage design yet undisclosed,  
Hath Iolaus spared Eurystheus' life,  
Inform me : for to us it seems unwise  
Not to avenge our wrongs when we have caught  
Our enemies.

*Servant.*

He through respect to you  
Hath acted thus, that you might see the tyrant  
Vanquished, and rendered subject to your power,  
Not by his own consent, but in the yoke  
Bound by necessity ; for he was loth  
To come into your presence, ere he bleed,  
And suffer as he merits. But farewell,  
O venerable matron, and remember  
The promise you first made when I began  
These tidings, and, oh, set me free : for nought  
But truth should from ingenuous lips proceed.

[*Exit SERVANT.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

To me the choral song is sweet,  
When the shrill flute and genial banquet meet,  
If Venus also grace the festive board :  
I taste a more refined delight  
Now I behold my friends (transporting sight !)  
To unexpected happiness restored.  
For in this nether world, eventful Fate,  
And Saturn's offspring Time, full many a change  
create.

I. 2.

Follow the plain and beaten way,  
From Justice, O my country, never stray,  
Nor cease the powers immortal to revere.  
To heights scarce short of frenzy rise  
The errors of that mortal, who denies  
Assent to truths confirmed by proofs so clear.  
Jove's power by signal judgments is descried,  
Oft as his vengeance blasts the towering crest of  
pride.



## II. 1.

In heavenly mansions with the blest,  
 Thy son, O venerable dame, doth rest ;  
 He hath confuted those invidious tales,  
 That to loathed Pluto's house he came  
 Soon as he perished in that dreadful flame :  
 He under roofs of burnished gold regales,  
 On the soft couch of lovely Hebe placed ; \*  
 Them two, both sprung from Jove, O Hymen, thou  
 hast graced.

## II. 2.

Events, which strike man's wondering eyes,  
 From a variety of causes rise.  
 For fame relates how Pallas saved the sire,  
 And from her city far renowned,  
 Her race, protection have the children found ;  
 She hath suppressed th' o'erweening tyrant's ire,  
 Whose violence no laws could ere control ;  
 Curse on such boundless pride, that fever of the soul.

MESSENGER, EURYSTHEUS, ALCMENA, CHORUS.

*Messenger.* Your eyes indeed behold, O royal dame,  
 Yet shall this tongue declare that we have brought  
 Eurystheus hither, unexpected sight,  
 Reverse of fortune his presumptuous soul  
 Foresaw not, this oppressor little deemed  
 That he should ever fall into your hands,  
 When from Mycene, by the Cyclops' toil  
 Erected, he those squadrons led, and hoped  
 With pride o'erweening to lay Athens waste ;  
 But Heaven our situation hath reversed :  
 And therefore with exulting Hyllus joins  
 The valiant Iolaus, in erecting  
 Trophies to Jove the author of our conquest.  
 But they to you commanded me to lead  
 This captive, wishing to delight your soul :  
 For 'tis most grateful to behold a foe  
 Fall'n from the height of gay prosperity.

*Alcmena.* Com'st thou, detested wretch ? at length hath  
 Justice  
 O'ertaken thee ? First hither turn thy head,

And dare to face thine enemies : for, dwindled  
 Into a vassal, thou no longer rul'st.  
 Art thou the man (for I would know the truth).  
 Who didst presume to heap unnumbered wrongs,  
 Thou author of all mischief, on my son  
 While yet he lived, wherever now resides  
 His dauntless spirit ? For in what one instance  
 Did'st thou not injure him ? At thy command,  
 Alive he travelled to th' infernal shades ;  
 Thou sent'st, and didst commission him to slay  
 Hydras and lions. Various other mischiefs,  
 Which were by thee contrived, I mention not,  
 For an attempt to speak of them at large  
 Would be full tedious. Nor was it enough  
 For thee to venture on these wrongs alone,  
 But thou, moreover, from each Grecian state  
 Me and these children hast expelled, though seated  
 As suppliants at the altars of the gods,  
 Confounding those whose locks are grey through age  
 With tender infants. But thou here hast found  
 Those who were men indeed, and a free city  
 Which feared thee not. Thou wretchedly shalt  
 perish,  
 And pay this bitter usury to atone  
 For all thy crimes, whose number is so great  
 That it were just thou more than once shouldst die.

*Messenger.* You must not kill him.

*Alcmena.* Then have we in vain  
 Taken him captive. But what law forbids  
 His being slain ?

*Messenger.* The rulers of this land  
 Consent not.

*Alcmena.* Is it not by them esteemed  
 A glorious action to despatch our foes ?

*Messenger.* Not such as they have seized alive in battle.

*Alcmena.* Is Hyllus satisfied with this decree ?

*Messenger.* He, in my judgment, will forsooth act rightly,  
 If he oppose what Athens shall enjoin.

*Alcmena.* The captive tyrant ill deserves to live,  
 Or longer view the sun.

*Messenger.* In this first instance  
 They did amiss, when by their swords he died not.

*Alcmena.* Is it not just that he should suffer still?

*Messenger.* He who will slay him is not to be found.

*Alcmena.* What shall I say if some adventurous hand——

*Messenger.* If you do this, you will incur great censure.

*Alcmena.* I love this city, I confess : but no man,  
Since he is fall'n into my power, shall force  
This prisoner from me : let them call me bold  
And more presumptuous than becomes a woman,  
I am resolved to execute my purpose.

*Messenger.* Full well I know the hatred which you bear  
To this unhappy man is terrible,  
And such as merits pardon.

*Eurystheus.* Be convinced  
Of this, O woman, that I cannot flatter,  
Nor to preserve this wretched life say aught,  
Whence they may brand me with a dastard's name.  
For I with much reluctance undertook  
This contest ; near in blood am I to thee,  
And of that race whence sprung thy son Alcides.  
But whether I consented, or was loth,  
Me Juno caused by her immortal power  
To harbour this dire frenzy in my breast.  
Since I became his foe, since I resolved  
Upon this strife, much mischief I devised,  
And brooded o'er it many a tedious night,  
That after I had wearied out and slain  
Those I abhorred, I might no longer lead  
A life of fear : for well I knew thy son  
Was no mere cipher, but a man indeed :  
Though strong my hate, on him will I confer  
The praise he merits from his valiant deeds.  
But after he was dead, was I not forced,  
Because I was a foe to these his sons,  
And knew what bitter enmity 'gainst me  
They from their sire inherited, to leave  
No stone unturned, to slay, to banish them,  
And plot their ruin ? Could I have succeeded  
In these designs, my throne had stood secure.  
If thou my prosperous station hadst obtained,  
Wouldst thou not have attempted to hunt down  
The lion's whelps, instead of suffering them  
At Argos unmolested to reside ?

*Chorus.* To you, Alcmena,  
A little wholesome counsel would I give,  
This captive monarch to release, since such  
The pleasure of the city.

*Chorus.* 'Twere best of all. But how can these two things  
Be reconciled?

*Eurystheus.* Destroy me if thou wilt ; to thee I sue not :  
But on this city, since it spared my life  
Through pious reverence, and forbore to slay me,  
Will I bestow an ancient oracle  
Of Phœbus, which in future times shall prove  
More advantageous than ye now suppose ;  
For after death, so have the Fates decreed.  
My corse shall ye inter before the temple  
Of the Pallenian maid : to you a friend  
And guardian of your city, shall I rest  
Beneath this soil for ever ; but a foe  
To those who spring from this detested race  
When with their armies they invade this land

Requiting with ingratitude your kindness :  
 Such strangers ye protect. But thus forewarned,  
 Why came I hither? Through a fond belief  
 That Juno was with far superior power  
 To each oracular response endued,  
 And that my cause she ne'er would have betrayed.  
 On me waste no libations, nor let gore  
 Be poured forth on the spot of my interment,  
 For I to punish these their impious deeds,  
 Will cause them with dishonour to return :  
 From me shall ye receive a double gain,  
 For you I will assist, and prove to them  
 Most baneful e'en in death.

*Alcmena.*

Why are ye loth

To slay this man, if what ye hear be true,  
 That welfare to this city hence will spring,  
 And your prosperity? For he points out  
 The safest road. Alive he is a foe,  
 But after he is dead will prove a friend.  
 Ye servants bear him hence, and to the dogs  
 Cast forth without delay his breathless corse !  
 Think not, presumptuous wretch, that thou shalt  
 live

Again t' expel me from my native land.

*Chorus.* With this am I well pleased. My followers, go.  
 For hence in our king's sight shall we stand guiltless.

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